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SERMON CCLVIII.

BY JEREMIAH DAY, D.D.

PRESIDENT OF YALE COLLEGE.

CONTENDING FOR THE FAITH.

JUDE v. 3.—*It was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you, that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints.*

WERE the apostle who wrote this epistles now on the earth, he would hardly find cause to complain, that there is not *contention* enough in the Christian Church; or that existing controversies are not conducted with sufficient *earnestness*; though he might not always approve of the *ground* of contention. And if any one has an inclination to engage in theological warfare, he may have an ample field for the exercise of his powers. Among the divisions and subdivisions of sects and parties, he may find abundant opportunity to exhibit his controversial skill. But in selecting the ground which he is to defend or attack, he may have occasion to inquire, whether by engaging in this or that theological contest, he will approve himself to God. Our text furnishes a rule, by which we may be safely guided, in choosing the field of our controversial labors. "Earnestly contend," says the apostle, "for the faith which was once delivered to the saints."

The word *faith*, in this place, as in many other passages of Scripture, is evidently used to signify, not the *act* of believing, but the

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object of belief; the *doctrines* of the true religion, as they had been made known to the Church. These truths, upon which our salvation depends, the apostle calls upon Christians to defend, with the earnestness which their immeasurable importance demands. The exhortation is confined to *revealed* truths. It makes no reference to the inventions of men; to the speculations of human philosophy. Its import may be expressed, in the following simple proposition.

IT IS THE DUTY OF CHRISTIANS, TO CONTEND EARNESTLY FOR THE SYSTEM OF DOCTRINES MADE KNOWN IN THE SCRIPTURES.

To illustrate this proposition, is the design of the present discourse. I propose to consider, first, what is implied in contending for the faith delivered to the saints; and secondly, what is *not* necessarily included, in a right performance of this duty.

I. Contending for the faith once delivered to the saints implies,

1. That, in opposition to infidels, we exhibit *the evidence of the authenticity of the Scriptures.*

The Bible contains the only original records which we have of the communications of the will of God to the prophets and apostles. If its authority be set aside, we are left without any satisfactory account of the system of truth delivered to the saints. The evidences of Christianity, as they are commonly termed, are the foundation of all our knowledge of scriptural theology. We are bound, therefore, to guard effectually against the sophistry and artful suggestions by which the primary article of our faith is liable to be assailed. Christians, at the present day, indeed, will rarely find opportunity to meet the infidel, in the use of fair and direct *argument.* But we are exposed to the more efficient weapons of ridicule, sly insinuation, and affected contempt. To ward off these, it is necessary to be well furnished with that defensive armour which historical truth, and the benevolent spirit of the Christian religion, so abundantly supply.

2. The next step, in defending the faith delivered to the saints, is to maintain the ground, that the Bible is not only an authentic record; but that "all Scripture is given *by inspiration of God;*" that "holy men of God spake as they were *moved by the Holy Ghost.*" If the Scriptures were only the work of well-meaning but erring men, we should have no infallible standard of doctrine and practice; no determinate rule to which we might refer our earnest discussions, for final adjudication. Theological controversies would be truly interminable.

But the faith of which the apostle speaks in our text, is that which was *delivered* to the saints; not that which they had discovered, by their own powers of reasoning. "I certify you, brethren," says

Paul, "that the gospel which was preached of me, *is not after man*: for I neither received it of man; neither was I taught it, but by the *revelation of Jesus Christ.*"* To the Thessalonians he says, "When ye received the word of God, which ye heard of us, ye received it, *not as the word of men;* but as it is in truth, *the word of God.*"† This is the broad and immoveable foundation of the Christian's faith. So long as we have evidence, that God has spoken to us in the Scriptures, so long may we know, that we have there the words of everlasting truth. There can be no firmer ground, on which to rest our religious belief and our hopes of salvation.

3. We are to contend for those *principles of interpretation*, which will lay open to our view the *true meaning* of the Scriptures; and not *bring to them* a meaning derived from our own preconceived opinions.

There are two widely different methods of interpreting the word of God. According to one of these, we first determine for ourselves what doctrines and precepts the Scriptures *probably* contain; and then set ourselves at work, to extort from them a meaning, in conformity with the opinions which we have already formed. All the arts of plastic criticism are applied, to modify and explain away the passages which, at first view, stand in the way of our favorite theories. There is no text, however unequivocal its genuine meaning, which may not be made to yield to this transforming process. The critical alchymy will bring forth from the crucible, any product which the dexterous operator wishes to obtain. The word of God may be appealed to, in support of as many different systems of theology, as ardent theorists choose to propose. If we can determine beforehand, what God *ought* to reveal to us, for what purpose do we *need* a revelation? On this supposition, our own powers of reasoning, without aid from above, can teach us all which it concerns us to know. It is a vain pretence, to profess to make the word of God the standard of our faith; while we mould it and shape it, at our pleasure, to render it conformable to schemes of theology of our own devising. It is not unfrequently the case, that far greater liberties are taken, with the Scriptures, than would be tolerated, in interpreting any other book.

But the true method of interpretation goes upon the supposition, that God has spoken to us, with a purpose of being understood; that his communications to us have one definite meaning; and that this is to be learned, by the ordinary rules of construction, by inquiring how the language would be understood, by those to whom it was

* Gal. i. 11, 12. † 1 Thess. ii. 13.

originally addressed. When we have thus found what God has actually spoken, we are not at liberty to substitute in the place of it, something else, which we should have thought would *more probably* be revealed. The true point of inquiry is, what *saith* the Scripture; what meaning does its language *convey* to us; and not, what construction may be *forced* upon it, by the perverted refinements of criticism. We are not, indeed, required to believe assertions which are intuitively or demonstrably false. If such were found in the Bible, they would prove it not to be the word of God. But he may reveal to us mysteries, which our own unaided reason would never have discovered. "Behold," says the apostle, "I *show* you a mystery." We are to contend, then, for those principles of interpretation, which will unfold to us the revelation of God, as it really is; and not transform it into another gospel.

4. We are to contend for the *very system* of truth which was delivered to the saints; to maintain it in its simplicity and purity, unadulterated with additions from the speculations of men.

There is one invariable meaning of the Scriptures; that which was given them, when originally written. Nothing has been added to this meaning, since the book of Revelation was brought to a close, by the apostle John. It will remain the same, till the heavens and the earth are no more. The same portion of the Bible has not different meanings, for different ages of the world; for different ranks of society; for different denominations of Christians. Its import may be more correctly *understood* at one time than another. It may have different *applications* to the learned and the ignorant; to the rich and the poor; to the monarch and his subjects. But the meaning of the word of God was the same, when used by Luther and his fellow-laborers, to expose the corruptions of popery; as when read, at the present day, in Christian lands; or carried to the heathen, in India, or Africa, or the islands of the Pacific. It is this one uniform meaning, which we are bound to search for, as for hid treasures; and which we are to keep distinct from every addition or variation suggested by the wisdom of men. If philosophizing Christians insist upon bringing forward their theories, and systems, and discoveries; let them have all due credit, for the products of their genius. But let them not blend their speculations with the truths which have come to us, in a voice from heaven. Let us always have it in our power, to distinguish the one from the other. Let there be a broad line of separation, between the reasonings of men, and communications from the infinite fountain of truth.

Contending for the Christian faith, implies that we contend for the

doctrines, and not merely the *words* of Scripture. A man may profess to believe all which the Bible contains; and yet may apply himself so intently to the task of *explaining away* its language, as to leave scarce a shadow of its genuine meaning. The use of the *words* of Scripture, is to communicate *truth*. If the latter is rejected, it is to no purpose, that the former are retained. A man may renounce all the essential doctrines of the gospel; and yet profess to have a sacred regard for the language of revelation. In contending for the faith, we are to maintain what *we ourselves* believe to be the meaning of Scripture; what, after diligent and impartial examination, we think the language clearly expresses. Though we may have a deference for the opinions of others; yet we are to determine the question of the correctness of their views, by bringing them for trial to the word of God.

We are bound to contend for the very same system of truth which is revealed in the Scriptures; as the danger is great, that it will be adulterated, by modifications and additions, introduced by theological controversy, and sectarian zeal. This has been the case, in every age of the Christian Church. Statements which were, at first, intended merely as *illustrations* of scriptural doctrine, become gradually incorporated, as a part of the system. In discourses from the desk, in theological discussions, in religious periodical publications, the results of our own reasoning become so insensibly blended with revealed truth, that it is no easy task, to separate the one from the other. This is necessary, however, if we would know what are truly the doctrines communicated from heaven.

These truths, in distinction from all others, we are strenuously to maintain, because infinite wisdom has given them the preference, in its message of mercy to our world. They are the truths on a belief of which, our everlasting salvation depends. "Go ye into all the world," says Christ, "and preach the *gospel* to every creature: he that believeth shall be saved." He that believeth what? The gospel of Christ; not the abstractions of philosophy. These are the truths which are accompanied with the sanctifying influence of the Spirit. "Sanctify them," says Christ, "through thy truth; *thy word* is truth." They are the truths which are such an overpowering efficacy, in the conversion of the heathen. Can this be said of our finely wrought metaphysical speculations? When missionaries of different denominations meet on pagan ground, they lay aside, in a great measure, their sectarian peculiarities, and affectionately unite in preaching the simple gospel of Christ. It is this, which causes the Christian to triumph on the bed of death. It is this, by which our final allotment will be fixed, at the judgment of the great day.

A zealous defence of scriptural doctrines is our duty, because they are *violently opposed.* Men destitute of godliness, however widely they may differ in other respects, are united in their hostility to the humiliating declarations, and unyielding demands of the gospel. They will tolerate any of the corruptions of Christianity, rather than the pure system of evangelical truth, as it was left by Christ and his apostles. This determined opposition calls for unceasing vigilance on the part of those who adhere to the faith, as it was delivered to the saints. The difficulty of the contest is greatly increased, from the necessity of frequently meeting an *insidious and treacherous enemy.* The opposers of the truth, instead of attacking it openly, may often effect their purpose more surely, by artfully *explaining away* the doctrines which they *profess* to believe. While they would wish to be thought sound in the faith, they are occupied in undermining the system which they pretend to support. Against this unwearied opposition, either open or concealed, the friends of the truth must steadily and boldly contend.

5. Contending for the primitive Christian faith, implies a defence not merely of what is *expressly* stated in the Scriptures; but also of what may be clearly *inferred* from the truths revealed. It would have been impossible to comprise in a single volume, particular directions applying to all the varieties of human conduct. General principles are laid down in the Scriptures; and are illustrated by examples, parables, answers to inquiries, and practical exhortations. In adapting these principles to our own circumstances, it is often necessary to draw conclusions from them, by a course of reasoning. Whatever points of doctrine or of duty, can be *manifestly* inferred from the express declarations of Scripture, may be considered as implied in the original Christian faith.

The proper mode of reasoning on theological subjects, is to start with premises given in the word of God; and from these, to deduce consequences applicable to the present condition and exigencies of the church. But even on this plan, when the course of argument is long and complicated, we are liable to much uncertainty in our results. The reasoning, on moral and religious subjects is, in many cases, of a character widely different from mathematical demonstration. In the latter, equal and absolute certainty runs through the whole. The conclusion, in a long chain of argument, is as indubitably evident, as any of the preceding steps. But in the *probable* arguments which are commonly applied to religious subjects, each step, as we advance, becomes weaker than the preceding. The conclusion is affected by *all* the chances of error, in the whole series of inferences. Little

reliance, therefore, is to be placed on the results, unless each is fortified by different lines of argument, all made to concur in proving the same point.

II. Our subject may be farther illustrated, by considering some modes of theological discussion, which are *not* necessarily implied in contending for the primitive Christian faith. There are various methods of professedly defending the doctrines of the gospel, which have a very doubtful claim to be included in the duty enjoyed in the text. Some of these, it may be proper, on the present occasion, to specify.

1. A defence of scriptural doctrines does not necessarily imply, that *we prove them to be true, by a course of argument* INDEPENDENT *of revelation*. The evidence on which they rest is this, that God, who cannot err, and will not deceive, has caused them to be revealed to us as true. We can have no higher ground of assurance, than the declaration, "Thus saith the Lord." No course of reasoning can add to the evidence. Will you undertake to *confirm* by logical deduction, what the God of heaven has declared to be true? Will you bring out your rushlight to add to the blaze of the noonday sun? Why not undertake to prove by argument, that we live, and feel, and think? When we have shown that the Bible is the word of God; and have clearly ascertained the meaning of any portion of it; all reasonable inquiry concerning the *truth* of what we find there, is at an end.

But suppose the meaning of a passage of Scripture is *doubtful?* The only way to determine the sense of it, is to apply to it correct principles of interpretation. If according to these, the language does not express a particular doctrine, then there is no evidence, that the doctrine is contained in the passage. Do you say, that one of the methods of interpretation, is to ascertain, by *reasoning*, whether the doctrine in question is true or not? But if it *is* true, it by no means follows, that it is contained in the passage under consideration; or even that it is a doctrine of Scripture. There are innumerable truths, which are not stated in the Bible.

But you say, if a doctrine is *not* true, it surely cannot be found in the word of God. If you can *demonstrate*, that is, if you can prove with *infallible certainty*, that a proposed doctrine is false or impossible; then indeed, it cannot be taught in the Scriptures. But determining what *cannot* be the meaning of a passage, is only one step towards showing what *is* the meaning. And even this negative point is not gained, by merely exhibiting the *improbability* of the doctrine in question, as seen by the light of nature alone. Many truths are found in the Bible, which to unassisted reason, would appear highly

improbable. The whole plan of redeeming mercy, is far beyond the power of human reason to contrive; or to render probable, without the aid of revelation. The natural probability or improbability of the truth of a doctrine, therefore, does not settle the question, whether it is contained in the Scriptures. Their meaning must be determined, on other grounds.

To admit nothing into our creed, but what can be proved by the light of nature alone, is to exclude all the peculiar doctrines of the gospel. Was it not highly improbable to human view, that he who was the brightness of his Father's glory, should come into our world, and suffer and die for those who have rebelled against the authority which all heaven obey? It is the very purpose of revelation, to disclose to us truths which we could not otherwise know. "Things which eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man conceived, God hath *revealed* to us by his Spirit." The numerous *miracles* recorded in Scriptures, are so many instances of events highly improbable, according to the common course of nature. Was it probable that Lazarus would come forth from the grave; that the Red Sea would divide its waters, at the lifting of Moses' rod; that Elijah would ascend in a chariot of fire to heaven? Are all accounts of this nature in the Scriptures to be explained away, upon neological principles of interpretation, till they become nothing more than figurative representations of ordinary events?

But we have to deal with those who *do not admit* the authority of the Bible. It is not necessary on *their* account, to resort to a course of reasoning, to establish religious principles?

How will you do this? Will you undertake to prove to them, in this way, *all* the truths of the Bible, or only *a part*? If a part only, how will this convert them to Christianity? Many Books which are not inspired contain *some* truths. If you can prove *all* the truths of Scripture, by a course of reasoning independent of divine testimony, what *need* is there of inspiration? Why may we not rely upon our own reason alone, as being itself sufficient to make known to us all the will of God?

He who believes only what he can prove without the aid of revelation, is still an infidel. He can never become a Christian, till he yields his assent to the testimony of God in the Scriptures. And then there will be no farther necessity of proving to him, *without* the Bible, the doctrines for which the Bible itself furnishes the best of all evidence. There are many of the most essential truths of the gospel, which you can never make manifest by the mere light of nature.

But how are we to combat the numerous *errors* among nominal *Christians?*

Do as Paul did: "Reason with them *out of the Scriptures.*" It may sometimes be expedient to use means, to *silence* those who array their metaphysical subtilties against the truths of revelation. It may be proper to meet them on their own ground; and to show them, that upon their own principles of reasoning, their positions are unfounded. But even here, the object should be, not to *prove* the doctrines of Scripture, by philosophical arguments; but by shaking the objector's confidence in his own speculations, to lead him to rest his belief on the authority of divine testimony. Unless you bring him to this, your efforts will be lost upon him. If he hear not Moses and the prophets, Christ and the apostles; you will in vain hope to convert him to the true faith, by the aid of philosophy. Are we destitute of sufficient evidence of the omniscience and veracity of God, till we can prove, from other sources, the truth of every thing which He has revealed?

2. Contending for the faith delivered to the saints, does not necessarily imply, that we contend for any particular *form of words*, different from those of Scripture, in which we or others have thought proper to express this faith.

A great portion of the ardent theological controversy which has existed in every age of the Christian Church, has been respecting the technical phraseology in which scriptural doctrines have been dressed. Particular words and phrases are regarded with as much veneration, as the language of the Bible itself. He who ventures to substitute for them other forms of expression, is considered as having rejected the *doctrines* which had been stated in these favorite terms. But scriptural truths are not of such a nature, that they can be justly exhibited, in one uniform set of words only. The meaning may be retained, while the language is varied. If no change could be made in the phraseology, without materially altering the sense, then we ought to confine ourselves to the terms of Scripture; to "the words which the Holy Ghost teacheth." We can find no perfect substitute for the language of inspiration. Still, there may be an advantage, for particular purposes, in adopting different modes of expression. Especially, if theology is to be thrown into the systematic form of a regular science; or if its principles are to be investigated, by a train of logical deductions; a corresponding precision of terms may be necessary. The language of Scripture is that of common life; not of abstract reasoning, and metaphysical exactness. But it was found sufficient for communicating all the truths which are necessary to

salvation and holiness of life. If a man maintains and expresses clearly all the great *doctrines* of Scripture, though he may do it in his own language, he is not to be considered a heretic.

Will it be said, that a public teacher may *explain away* the language of the Bible; and therefore, that it may be necessary to have some settled phraseology agreed upon, to protect the sacred pages from perversion? But he may, with greater ease, explain away any merely human composition. Can you throw around him a wall of words so firm, that he can find no way of breaking through it? The very fact, that a form of words long in use, is liable to have its meaning gradually changed by continued efforts to explain it away, may render it necessary to substitute, from time to time, other expressions, which have not been, subjected to this modifying process.

On the other hand, when terms well selected have been judiciously applied to revealed truth; when they have been found, on trial, to answer the purpose for which they were adopted, that of conveying distinctly the meaning of Scripture; and especially, if they have come into familiar use, and are well understood by Christians in common life; it is unwise to set them aside; and to introduce others which are liable to be misapprehended, and to excite alarm and suspicion, among those who would sacredly preserve the purity of Christian doctrines. Still it should be remembered, that evangelical truth is not so dependent on the language in which *we* may think proper to clothe it, as to justify vehement contention among Christians, about words and phrases which the Holy Ghost has not taught. There was too much of this unwarrantable controversy, it would seem, even among the primitive Christians. "Charge them before the Lord," says the apostle, "that they strive not about *words*, to no profit."

3. Defending the truths of revelation, does not imply, of course, a defence of the *philosophical theories or hypotheses* which have been proposed, to explain the grounds, and reasons, and causes, of what is revealed. Theoretical explanations are not the *evidence* on which our belief of these truths should rest. We are bound to receive them, on the simple testimony of God. The philosophical explanation which is *added* to the scriptural statement, is no part of the revelation. We may believe in the resurrection of the dead, without attempting to explain the *manner* in which they will rise. We may believe, that "those who are alive, at the coming of our Lord, will be changed, in the twinkling of an eye;" though we may have no hypothesis, to account for the change. We may believe that the soul is united to the body, without advancing a theory, to explain the

nature of this union. We may believe that God is omniscient, without giving a philosophical account of the grounds of this knowledge.

But how, it may be asked, can we believe that which we *do not understand?* We *do* understand the thing which we believe. But *something else*, supposed to be *connected* with this, we may, perhaps, not understand. We can understand the *fact*, that Moses and Elias appeared to the three disciples, on the mount of transfiguration; though we may not know, in *what manner* they came there. We can understand, that our limbs move, at the bidding of our wills; though nothing is more mysterious, than the influence of the mind upon the body. We may believe in the growth of trees and plants; though we know nothing of the principle of vegetable life. We may understand what is meant by the diurnal revolution of the earth, without proposing a theory to assign the *cause* of this motion. We may understand the momentous truth, that God works in us, to will and to do; though we may not be able to explain the *mode* in which he operates on our hearts. What is revealed, that is, what is *made known to us*, we can certainly understand. In the common business and intercourse of life, we become acquainted with innumerable facts, that have causes, and consequences, and relations, which no philosophy can explain. Indeed, *every* fact is connected, either directly or remotely, with something else which is inexplicable. The nature of our minds, the power of life in our bodies, the air we breathe, the light of heaven, are full of mysteries. If we could not understand anything, without being able to explain all its relations to other objects; we could know absolutely nothing.

Will it be said, that in this age of light and inquiry, there is no getting along without philosophical theology; that both Christians and opposers of the truth, *will have their theories;* that if you do not furnish them with such as are sound, they will adopt those which are false and dangerous; that the doctrines of Scripture will not be received, without *some* theory to explain them?

Have we then come to this, that, with the Bible in our hands, philosophy is, after all, the foundation of our belief; and the guide of our conduct; that, though we profess to receive the Scriptures, as the word of the living God; yet we really give credit to his declarations, *so far only*, as they conform to our preconceived philosophical opinions; that the testimony of omniscience itself, is not sufficient to gain our assent to a doctrine, till our limited understandings have found out a theory to explain it? Brethren, I fear we are far out at sea, on the drifting tide of adventurous speculation. And our chart, instead of being the infallible guide of everlasting truth, is, too often, the conjectural sketch of some bold projector.

But are we forbidden to exercise our own reasoning powers, on subjects contained in the Scriptures? By no means; provided our speculations are made to keep their proper place, in relation to the divine testimony. If they are not allowed to modify, or explain away scriptural truth; or to affect its credibility; if they are not offered, as a necessary *supplement* to the Bible; they may be allowed, as gratifying a rational curiosity; as giving to insulated doctrines a connected arrangement; as illustrating the harmony between the truth which the Creator has presented to us in his word, and the light which he has thrown around us in his works.

But what is to be done with those who bring forward their theories, in *opposition* to the doctrines of Scripture? They are undoubtedly to be met, either by exposing the fallacy of their particular views, or by doing that which is far better, convincing them, that a God of eternal truth is to be believed, whatever becomes of our theories and speculations. If you merely combat a man's particular sophistry, you will only induce him to shift his ground: to substitute one false scheme for another: for theories can be fabricated, as easily, and as abundantly, as the imagery of the poet. And many of them can be taken to pieces, with as much dispatch, as they have been put together. The work of mutually constructing and destroying them, is going on rapidly, at the present day. Theological combatants are fast demolishing each other's hypotheses; and thus furnishing most abundant proof, that philosophy is no sure foundation for religion truth. The assailants themselves are evidently beginning to be sensible, how much easier it is to prostrate the theories of others, than to give any firm support to their own. If we must be involved in unceasing controversy, we may find some relief from our fears, in observing how extensively, philosophical theology is applied to its appropriate use, that of *confuting* philosophical theology. It is well employed, when made to bear upon thosewho bring forward their own deceptive reasoning, in opposition to the statements of Scripture. Though the philosophy which is consistent with the Bible, may not be so important, as to call for any earnest contention; yet that which is *opposed* to revealed truth, ought undoubtedly to be wrested from the hand of the enemy, as a powerful and dangerous weapon. This should be done, however, for the purpose of converting those who are in error, not from one hypothesis to another; but from *all* their speculations, to a belief in the simple testimony of God. Defending the Christian faith, implies that all attacks upon it be firmly resisted. But opposition to scriptural truth, is to be carefully distinguished, from opposition to some *philosophi-*

cal explanation, which has been *added* to the Scriptures. It is often the case, that a man is charged with assailing revealed truth; when his attacks have really been directed against some *philosophical hypothesis:* all the opposition in the case, being between one theory and another; when neither of them, perhaps, has any necessary connection with what God has declared in his word.

Some may inquire whether the *doctrines* of Scripture ought to be, or even can be, separated from the *philosophy* which belongs to them? To this I answer, that the philosophy which is found *in the Bible itself*, is as much a part of revelation, as the doctrines, the commands, or the predictions. We can no more be justified in rejecting any philosophical explanation contained in the Scriptures, than in setting aside their historical or doctrinal statements. I am not objecting to *inspired* philosophy; but to those inventions of men, which claim to be the guides of our faith, on points that have been settled by divine authority. If we *must* have theological philosophy, let it be the philosophy of Moses, of Isaiah, and of Paul; not of Plato, of Aristotle, and of Kant

The apostles, it may be said, have set us *an example* of philosophical discussion. They did not merely communicate the truths which they had received, by revelation from heaven; but they *reasoned* with those to whom they spake. It ought to be considered, however, that much of their reasoning was addressed to unbelieving Jews or heathen; neither of whom admitted their claim to a divine commission. They were dealing not with Christians; but with infidels. These could be met, upon their own ground only. But in the epistles written to Christian churches, the reasoning is commonly founded on the Old Testament, which, at that time, constituted the volume of Scripture.

But is not philosophy necessary, in the *interpretation* of Scripture? Is not some *previous knowledge* requisite, to enable us to understand the language? Such knowledge, undoubtedly, as was common to the persons to whom it was originally addressed; the husbandmen, and shepherds, and fishermen of Judea. Such philosophy as that with which Peter, and Matthew, and John were familiar. The language of Scripture is generally the simple diction of common life. It must have been well understood, by those to whom it was originally spoken. But it by no means follows, that they were previously familiar with the *truths* which it was employed to communicate. A distinct apprehension of the meaning of words, does not imply a knowledge of all the propositions which can be expressed in those words. An acquaintance with arithmetical numbers, and

their names, does not include all which can be known of arithmetic. A familiarity with the terms and definitions in Euclid's Elements, does not constitute all the knowledge of geometry. Several important doctrines which Christ himself taught, were in direct opposition to the previous opinions of his hearers. The most sublime and surprising truths may often be expressed in terms perfectly familiar. It was the very design of a revelation intended for all mankind, to make known the high and wonderful purposes of heaven, in the simple language of common life. A knowledge of this language, and of the meaning which it conveys, does not necessarily imply any special philosophical attainments; or any previous acquaintance with the truths to be revealed. Do you inquire, whether the *foundation* of our religious belief, must not be laid in a correct philosophy? The foundation of our religion ought not to be laid in *any* philosophy, but that which proves the Scriptures to be the word of God, and enables us to understand its meaning. "Other foundation can no man lay, than that which *is* laid."

4. Contending for the faith delivered to the saints, does not imply, that we undertake to free it from all the *difficulties* which may be connected with the truths revealed. A revelation respecting the purposes, providence, and moral government, of the infinite Ruler, must present many considerations, which are mysterious to the limited powers and attainments of man. The *facts* and the *doctrines* which are stated, may be very plain. But we may start inquiries respecting the *causes* of the facts, and the *manner* in which they exist, concerning points which are *not* revealed. Some difficulties may indeed, be explained. But many will remain, after all our endeavors to solve them. The explanation which is given of one mystery, will often bring others into view, which are still greater. The difficulties which we must encounter, in our investigations, instead of becoming less numerous, multiply upon us, as we advance in knowledge. The more a man enlarges the horizon of his mental vision, the broader is the circle from which he looks out upon an unlimited space, in which nothing is distinctly apprehended. As he ascends one height after another, it is to bring others into view, yet farther on, and still bounding his prospect.

If we suspend our belief, till we can free the truths of revelation from all mystery, we shall *never* believe them. The attributes of God, the purposes of his throne, the revelations of his vast and eternal kingdom, are too high to be fully comprehended by us. "No man can find out the work that God maketh, from the beginning to the end." Our own existence, the constitution of our minds, the

heavens and the earth, the allotments of providence, are full of inexplicable wonders. But in all these manifestations of unsearchable wisdom, we admit the facts, without waiting for an explanation of the mysteries with which they are connected. We give credit to the assertions of *men*, respecting events which are wholly unaccountable. And shall we call in question the testimony of *God*, till we can satisfy ourselves, that everything to which it refers, is, in all its relations, within the reach of our comprehension? If a man renounces his religious principles, whenever he meets with a difficulty respecting them; he must give up one point after another, till he arrives at atheism, which involves greater mysteries, than any or all other opinions.

5. Defending the primitive faith does not necessarily imply that we earnestly contend for every point which may be *connected* even with *fundamental* doctrines. Concerning the *most essential* truths of revelation, many inquiries may be started and many suggestions proposed which are comparatively unimportant. Whatever God has thought proper to reveal, respecting the fundamental truths of Christianity, we are bound to defend, against all opposition. But we are not under obligation to maintain, with the same earnestness, every point which our own ingenuity has brought into view upon the same subjects. All which is in any way *connected* with essential truth, is not of course essential, even though it may be true. Some seem to think, that the fundamental doctrines of the gospel, have so hazardous a position, that if even the *dust* which has gathered upon these corner-stones be disturbed, the whole fabric will be shaken. Many erect for themselves a finely proportioned theological system, with its stories, and columns, and arches, and key stones; composed of materials partly taken from the word of God, and partly such as their own hands have wrought: and when it is finished, they appear to be apprehensive, that if a little of their untempered mortar be removed, the entire structure will be in danger. It *may be*, that all the important parts of revealed truth, have such relations to each other, that *to the view of omniscience*, any one implies the whole. But our limited understandings cannot discover all the links of the chain which binds them together. Nor is this requisite for the establishment of our faith. When it is necessary to prove any point, by a course of argument *independent* of revelation, we must be able to trace its connection with something previously known. But God by his simple declaration, can give us the fullest assurance of the truth of any doctrine, without pointing out the relations which it bears to other parts of the Christian system. Nothing can shake the

foundation on which it rests, but that which goes to prove, that the Scriptures which contain the doctrine are not the word of God.

6. Contending for the Christian faith does not imply a defence of all the *additions* which have been made to this faith, with a view of supplying supposed *deficiencies* in the Scriptures. In our controversies with Papists, we frequently refer to the fundamental doctrine of Protestantism, that the word of God is the only and *sufficient* rule of faith. But whatever may be our professions, I fear that we are far from adhering to this principle in practice.

Additions may be made insensibly, and without any design of corrupting the word of God. But they become, by degrees, so effectually incorporated with scriptural truth, that it is not easy to separate the alloy from the original material with which it is blended? And we often contend, with more ardent zeal, for our own additions, than for the pure word of God. Can this be justified upon Christian principles? When God has given us a revelation, with the express design of saving our fallen world; when He continued his communications to prophets and apostles, through successive ages, "that the man of God might be *perfect, thoroughly furnished* unto all good works;" and when, on bringing the inspired volume to a close, he pronounced so fearful a curse upon the "man that shall *add to these things;*" shall we declare, by our conduct, that we consider the book as, after all, *defective*; insufficient for the purpose for which it was given? There may be religious truths which are not found in the Bible. But are they such as are necessary to salvation and holiness of life? Are they the truths which were used by the apostles, to bring the gentiles to repentance, or which are especially blessed by the Divine Spirit, to the conviction and conversion of sinners, the increasing sanctification of Christians, and reviving the power of godliness in the Church? Are they the great instrument by which missionaries, at the present day, are shaking the foundations of pagan supersition? Are they the truths by which the departing spirit is sustained in the hour of death; and by which the world will be tried, at the judgment of the great day?

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SERMON CCLIV.

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THE SINNER HIS OWN DESTROYER.

EZEKIEL xxxiii. 11.—*As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live; turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways, for why will ye die, O house of Israel?*

THE word death is used with some variety of signification in the sacred scriptures. In some places it denotes the separation of the soul from the body. It is then called temporal death—in others, it expresses the separation of the soul from purity and holiness, and from the favor of God in the present life. It is then denominated spiritual death—or a death "in trespasses and sins." And in others still, it signifies the entire and everlasting abandonment of the soul by God to sin, misery, and ruin in the future world. This is eternal death.

The text teaches us then, that *God has no pleasure in the eternal death of the wicked.*

This is evident from what he has said, and from what he has done.

It is manifest,

1. *From what God has said.* In the text, he has declared most explicitly, that he has no pleasure in the death of the wicked. And this declaration is confirmed, too, by all the so-

lemnities of an oath—"As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked." The same truth is also affirmed in the following passages from the Word of God: "The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is long suffering to us-ward, *not willing that any should perish*, but that all should come to repentance." "Who will have all men to be saved, and to come to the knowledge of the truth."

The invitations of the Son of God, extended to impenitent sinners, accord most perfectly with the declarations which have now been presented. "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." "Him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out." "And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come: and whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." Are all these explicit declarations and these encouraging invitations devoid of meaning? Is Jehovah insincere and heartless in those manifestations of feeling which are made, when he exclaims, "O that they were wise, that they understood this, that they would consider their latter end!" "O that my people had hearkened unto me, and Israel had walked in my ways!" Who is prepared to take upon himself the tremendous responsibility of charging God with insincerity? The conclusion then is inevitable, that God takes no pleasure in the death of the wicked.

But let us consider,

2. *What God has done in behalf of sinners.* Here we shall find still stronger evidence, that he has no pleasure in the death of the wicked. He has manifested his sincere desire for their eternal happiness, by plain and intelligible action.

God has shown in the very structure of the human soul, that he takes no delight in the sinner's destruction; else, why has he endowed man with conscience, which clearly distinguishes between right and wrong in human feeling and action; which marks out before him the path of duty, and secretly influences him to walk therein by its approving smile; while it warns him against entering upon the path of disobedience, by its admonitory voice? Else, why has he connected pleasurable emotions with the possession of benevolent feeling; while pain and misery follow the indulgence of malice and revenge? The entire influence of the action of our moral nature is to involve in the deepest darkness the pathway of sin, while it sheds the clearest light upon the pathway of holiness. But the pathway of sin leads downward to eternal death; while the pathway of holiness leads upward to everlasting life. God then

has shown, by the very manner in which he has framed the human soul, that he takes no pleasure in the death of the sinner. In the remorse inflicted by a guilty conscience, in the misery consequent upon the indulgence of sinful passion, in the gloom and thick darkness which a course of transgression brings over the faculties and prospects of the soul, the voice of God may be distinctly heard, warning the sinner against walking in the broad road that leadeth to destruction. And on the other hand, in the peace and self-satisfaction occasioned by an approving conscience, in the pleasure resulting from the exercise of holy affection, in the clear and tranquil light which shines into the mind and along the path of him who is obedient to the divine commands, the voice of God may be as distinctly heard, inviting and encouraging the soul to enter the narrow way that leadeth to life.

But this is not all that God has done in our behalf. We have transgressed the divine law, and are consequently liable to eternal death. And yet, after we had thus exposed ourselves to endless ruin—even when we stood upon the crumbling brink of perdition, and were in momentary danger of falling to rise no more—the arm of God was extended to our aid. When the curses of a broken law were gathering above us, in one black cloud of vengeance, and were ready to descend in a dreadful tempest upon our unsheltered heads; then Jehovah interposed to shield us from the impending storm. He raised up in behalf of our ruined race a Redeemer, who is mighty to save. And through the broad and ample atonement for sin, which has been effected by the crucifixion of his own dear Son, he is "reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them."

And in furtherance of this benevolent purpose, he has given us the *means* of reconciliation—he has placed the Bible in our hands—he has given us his holy Sabbaths—he permits us to tread the courts of his earthly sanctuary—he has blessed us with the Christian ministry—he has granted us the privilege of social and secret prayer. In addition to the gift of these means of grace, he sends down the Holy Spirit to render them efficacious in convincing the sinner of guilt, and in turning the soul to God through faith in a crucified Saviour.

God has done all these things in behalf of sinners, and they should be regarded in the light of so many obstacles, by which Jehovah has blocked up the avenues which lead to ruin. When conscience lifts up her voice of admonition, when the Bible publishes its precious promises and its fearful threatenings, when it gives bright glimpses of heavenly felicity, or

dreadful exhibitions of future woe, they should be looked upon as the direct exertions of God to save sinners from eternal misery. And, my impenitent hearers, you must surmount all these obstacles before you can seize on death. Yes, you must press your way through Bibles and Sabbaths, through the intercessions of saints and the entreaties of God's ambassadors; and that, too, while the Gospel remonstrates, while your conscience twinges at every step, and your ears ring with warnings, before you can go down to endless ruin.

Consider, also, my impenitent hearers, how much God has done for you as *individuals*, to deter you from misery, and to allure you to happiness. How often has he called upon you by the private conversation of some Christian friend, by the reproofs of your own conscience, or by some merciful or afflictive dispensation of his providence, saying, "Why will ye die?" Doubtless his dealings have been very different with different individuals, having adapted his discipline to the varying characters, and habits, and circumstances of mankind. Upon some of you he has bestowed riches, and honors, and pleasures. He has strewed your path through life with the choicest and most fragrant flowers. He has seldom blighted your cheering hopes, or even darkened the sunshine of your present prosperity. On the contrary, he has loaded you with the most invaluable blessings. And he has done all this to allure you to himself by the strong principle of gratitude. Others of you have met with disappointment, have been reduced to poverty, have been defeated in the pursuit of honor and pleasure. And why have you been thus afflicted? Why, that finding no perfect and permanent enjoyment here, you might seek a resting-place for your deathless souls in the bosom of God. Perhaps disease has laid some of you on the bed of sickness. You were brought to the verge of the grave—to the borders of the eternal world. But God, infinite in kindness, removed from you his heavy-pressing hand, lengthened out your season of probation, and waited to see if you would heed the warnings of his voice. But I must leave you to follow out this subject by examining in detail your individual history.

Now I would ask, unless God takes no pleasure in the death of the wicked, why has he done so much to save them? Why has he so impressively taught us, by the very constitution of our moral nature, the inestimable value of holiness and the exceeding sinfulness of sin? Why did he make such costly provisions for our salvation as are contained in the Gospel, after we had ruined ourselves by transgression? Why does he encircle us with so many and such various means of grace?

Why has he shed down upon us so abundantly the influences of his Spirit? Why has he borne so long with us, notwithstanding our numberless and aggravated sins? Why has his indignation slumbered so long, while his mercy has been constantly following us in all our guilty wanderings from him, and inviting us with unequalled tenderness to return? Why was not his arm of tenderness long since uplifted, to strike the fatal blow that would blot us from the scroll of being, and banish us from the land of hope? The only satisfactory answer that can be given to these and the like questions is, that God takes no pleasure in the death of sinners. No: he takes no pleasure in their everlasting misery and ruin. He would prefer to have them turn and live. Good-will to men is the sum and substance of the Gospel dispensation. Such are the real feelings of God towards mankind. He is not willing that they should be doomed to an everlasting exile from his blissful presence. He feels for them more than parental solicitude and affection. And he says to them with unfeigned sincerity and tenderness, "Turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die?"

This subject suggests for our consideration the following reflections:

1. *God does not compel sinners to go down to ruin.* I know that many are disposed to question the truth of this statement. And the reason is, that they are unwilling to acknowledge that every thing in the way of their salvation is to be found in the aversion of their own hearts to the character and requirements of God. This unwillingness prevails extensively among those whose hearts have never been humbled into penitence and melted into contrition. They discover a strong inclination to exculpate themselves from guilt, even at the expense of casting the blame of their perdition upon Him who made them. Accordingly they will bring forward objections to silence the faithful warnings of friendship, and the stirring reproofs of conscience. At one time the decrees of God excuse them. At another their own inability to perform their duty exempts them from blame. And when they are told that no purpose of God compels men to sin, and that all their inability consists in an enmity of heart against the character and government of Jehovah, which involves the very essence of all guilt—still they continue to quiet the remonstrances of conscience, to cast the blame of their destruction upon their Maker; and thus they dishonor that God whom all the inhabitants of heaven adore, and whom they should love with the strength and fulness of undivided hearts.

But from the considerations advanced in this discourse we may learn that these sentiments are entirely erroneous. No, my impenitent hearers, God does not compel you to walk in the broad road that leadeth to destruction. He neither commands nor compels you to sin. Nay, he forbids your choice of sin. He commands you by all the weight of his awful authority to repent. Every step which you take in the road that leadeth to destruction, is taken directly in the face of all God's prohibitions, and threatenings, and entreaties. Every inch of your progress in the way of sin presses you harder and harder upon the point of his avenging sword; and unless God, in great mercy, had drawn it back, it would long since have pierced the vitals of your happiness. God, instead of urging you down to hell, has done every thing to allure you to heaven. He has presented before you the mightiest inducements to lead a life of faith and holiness. And remember that, if at last you sink into endless ruin, the throne of God will be entirely guiltless of the blood of your soul.

2. *Every sinner must turn from the evil of his ways, or he will finally perish.* This truth is implicd in the text. Else, why does God call upon the wicked to turn from their evil ways and live? He knows that sin, if persisted in, will ruin the sinner; and therefore he urges him to abandon it for ever.

The same truth is *plainly* asserted in the word of God. "Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven." "And there shall in no wise enter into it anything that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination or maketh a lie." I know that God has no pleasure in the death of the wicked. Neither does he take any delight in sin. He compassionates the guilty; but he has no sympathy with guilt. It is that abominable thing which his soul hateth. And never will he permit the impenitent sinner to taste of the joys of heaven. His indignation will at last awake, and burn against the hardened transgressors of his law for ever and ever.

Nay, it is impossible to save from death the soul that continues in the love and the practice of iniquity. For sin, operating according to its own nature, will destroy the happiness of the spirit. It darkens the understanding, depraves the heart, corrodes the passions, and burdens the conscience. And how can a soul in such a condition be happy? How can it be otherwise than miserable? It contains within itself the causes of its misery, the materials and elements of its destruction. And it can be happy in no place while it remains in such a state.

Place it, if you please, in the very paradise of God—let it behold all the glory of the Deity, and all the bliss experienced by the redeemed around the throne of the Eternal—let it gaze upon the verdant fields and extended plains of the heavenly Canaan, and it will be wretched still. It is diseased by sin; and as well might you expect to restore to health a man pining away in sickness, in consequence of placing him in a stately palace, and surrounding him with worldly pomp and glory, as to cure in this way the sickness of the soul. It is dead in sin; and as well might you expect to raise a dead body to life, by having the glories of nature shine upon it, as to quicken into spiritual life and happiness a soul dead in sin, in consequence of its being surrounded by the glories of the upper world. The truth is, before a soul spiritually dead can be made susceptible of spiritual enjoyment, it must be raised to life. He, who raised the dead to life while here on earth, must quicken the soul, and raise it from the grave of trespasses and sins. The same Spirit that brooded over the watery elements at the creation must hover over the elements of the soul, and out of the chaos of its troubled thoughts and feelings bring forth a new creation adorned with the "beauties of holiness." All this may now be done for the sinner. He lives under the redeeming economy of the Gospel, under the dispensation of the Holy Spirit. And if, during the season of probation, he abandons sin, and returns to God and duty through faith in Christ, he may attain eternal life. But if his immortal interests are neglected till the period of his earthly trial close, he will sink down forever in the abyss of misery and ruin.

3. *If impenitent sinners are eternally ruined, they are self-ruined.* God has declared that he is willing to save every repenting sinner. He has made adequate provision in the Gospel to accomplish this object. He presses the offer of salvation upon the sinner in ten thousand forms. He has stationed a messenger of mercy at every turn and corner in the downward road to ruin, to call after the deluded sinner and entreat him to turn and live. And if he refuse to listen to these merciful invitations, if he will pursue with unyielding determination his dark and guilty course, he certainly can blaim bo one but himself when he finds himself overwhelmed with remediless destruction. Mansions of eternal rest in heaven were offered to him for an everlasting habitation, but he preferred the path that led him to the prison of despair. Eternal life was placed within his reach, but he chose the way that leadeth to eternal death

In concluding this discourse, permit me to ask you, my im-

penitent hearers, "Why will ye die?" Why will ye ruin forever all your bright and pleasant prospects? Why will you separate yourselves from God, the source and fountain of all happiness? Why will you destroy your own peace of mind and rush upon destruction, when apprised of your danger? O my friends, awake, I entreat you,—awake *now* to your everlasting welfare. "As though *God* did beseech you by me, I pray you, in *Christ's stead*, be ye reconciled to God.

SERMON CCLV.

BY REV. SYLVESTER WOODBRIDGE,

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THE DEVOTED PASTOR.

I. TIMOTHY, iv. 15.—*Meditate upon these things; give thyself wholly to them.*

The gift communicated to Timothy as a minister of Christ by the laying on of the hands of the Presbytery, involved relationships to God, to the church, and to the world, requiring all his time, talents, and efforts. In temporal pursuits, eminence and success can result only from unity of purpose and unyielding perseverance. In the sacred calling these qualifications are equally indispensable, and the want of them is ruinous if not unpardonable. The truths to be investigated; the active duties to be performed; the various dispositions and characters of men to be conciliated; the hope of usefulness; the claims of Christ; the overwhelming consequences connected with the ministry; and the solemn account to be rendered at the bar of God—separately and together, urge upon the Christian minister "to *give himself wholly to his work.*"

1. THE TRUTHS TO BE INVESTIGATED are too vast and profound to be appreciated by a mind distracted with other and contending interests. The theological student must not linger among material scenes, nor stop to gather flowers in gardens of fancy. His spirit must nerve its wing to reach the pure source of created existences—the throne of God. The character, the

plans of Jehovah, and the motives determining the immutable moral laws by which creatures and their actions are governed, constitute the medium of his contemplation upon the works of creation and of providence. Amidst the displays of infinite power and goodness pervading the universe, one object above the rest awakens his adoration ; it is the cross of Jesus Christ. A crucified Saviour, seen by the eye of faith, renders other things, however august, comparatively insignificant. From the moment this world emerged into being, onward through eternity, by the rays emanating from Calvary, fresh glories are disclosed on every page of the divine operations. For the benefit of man, a worm, the stupendous scheme of redemption was devised. Mysteries here cluster in boundless profusion to exemplify the perfections of the Deity, and at once to humble and enrich the fallen sinner.

Patient, prayerful research; diligence in comparing spiritual things with spiritual ; and a vigor of mind which will not succumb to discouragement, are necessary to the profitable investigation of the Bible. As the miser values gold, and to acquire or preserve it passes sleepless nights, so the minister of Christ must obtain and retain a thorough knowledge of the Gospel by the cheerful exercise of indefatigable self-denial.

II. The *public and* ACTIVE DUTIES of the ministry require *entire devotion to the work.* The results of the study are to be communicated to the people. In preaching, acceptable words are to be sought out. Nothing perhaps is more difficult than to combine propriety above the censure of a refined taste, with a common phraseology understood by all. Of the style of the Bible, this characteristic is eminently predicable.

Our translation is considered a standard of the English language, and yet, among all classes, the expressions are familiar. The preacher who wishes to instruct his hearers will not fail to avail himself of its rich and simple variety.

The constant object in preaching, indeed, should be plainly and faithfully to exhibit the method and conditions of salvation. Every sermon ought to contain enough of truth to deprive the sinner of the excuse of ignorance, though it were the first and the last sermon he should ever hear.

People must be *visited.* In proportion to the direct application of truth, beneficial effects are usually realized. In private conversation we have closer access to the heart and conscience, than when the individual addressed is one among a multitude, andhe has less opportunity of diverting the shaft by applying our remarks to others—a device of Satan which effectually counteracts all conviction of personal guilt and danger. A minister suitably impressed with the worth of souls will not fail to go from house to house, warning and persuading every

man to be "wise for himself." His interviews with his people will savor of the thrilling themes connected with his calling. When it is said *the minister is coming*, his object will be understood. Pastoral visitation, however, important as it is, when circumstances demand, must yield to the higher claims of the pulpit. The professing Christian who, for the pleasure of social intercourse with his pastor, would starve the congregation, to say the least, must be very selfish.

The sick and the dying must not be neglected; too often, alas! a painful duty. Standing by the death-bed of an impenitent sinner, whom we have repeatedly entreated to flee from the wrath to come, but who has disregarded the expostulations of mercy, is an awful position. What remorse, what unavailing groans are the frequent accompaniments of such a scene! Writhing in the embraces of the king of terrors, the victim bewails the past and wails for the future—God slighted, Christ rejected, and the soul undone! And is there no redeeming counterpart to this frightful tragedy? Yes; the triumphant exit of a Christian, to whom God, through Christ, gives the victory. In the dying believer, the excellency of the religion we preach shines out with unequalled lustre, and we retire from the spectacle rejoicing to consecrate ourselves wholly to the ministrations of that Gospel which is now felt to be the power of God unto salvation.

To the *rising generation* special regard is due. On the young mind a kind expression may leave an indellible impression. Seed sown in the spring-time quickens into verdure and produces an abundant harvest. The Sabbath-school has been called the nurcery of the church. Blessed be God, it contains plants not only of pious parental instruction, but also from domestic circles where all religious culture would otherwise be neglected. Though a pastor may be prevented by other public duties from assisting personally in the Sabbath-school, the cause will be near his heart, and he will advance its prosperity by his prayers, his recommendations, and by his addresses to the pupils. With the exception of the Gospel ministry, no institution is more important; none whose downfall should be more earnestly deprecated. The libraries connected with the schools, if the selection be judicious, are a hallowed leaven diffused through the whole community, "known and read of all."

Respect for the Saviour's last command, "to publish the Gospel to every creature," and a desire to appear at last among those who turn many to righteousness, can hardly fail to insure the co-operation of ministers in the *benevolent enterprises* of the age. From what other quarter, by what other instrumentality is deliverance to come? Shall we not be grateful to God for

organizations enabling pastors confined to a particular charge, still to make their influence felt, through the benefactions of their people, to the ends of the world? Moving in their respective orbits, their attraction operates and their light shines through the whole system. In adopting a narrow, selfish policy, the moral energies of a minister are prostrated, his views become more and more contracted, until, if he survives to advanced years, his solicitude converges to a point upon himself and his family,—"what shall they eat, what they shall drink, and wherewithal they shall be clothed,"—an ambassador of God transformed into a shrivelled spectre of worldly anxiety.

III. The VARIETY of DISPOSITIONS and CHARACTERS of persons to be conciliated, requires a knowledge not only of the prominent features, but of the minute shades of human nature—a knowledge attainable only by close observation, deep reflection and long experience.

The lurking prejudices of early education and habits, and the views originating in the occupations and pursuits of life, are to be detected. In the feelings of unsuspecting youth, of manhood, and of decrepid age, the minister must sympathize, weeping with them that weep, and rejoicing with them that rejoice. Yet this spirit of accommodation, this wisdom of the serpent, is not to prevail at the expense of the harmlessness of the dove. Not an article of his divine commission may be compromised, nor an item of truth yielded to the adversary. For the purpose of exposing the hearts of individuals, the sagacity here referred to was often exhibited by the Saviour. Take for example the young man who had kept the whole law from his youth up: "Yet," said Christ, "one thing thou lackest; sell all that thou hast and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven, and come follow me." By this simple application to the ruling passion, without a harsh word, the legalist's deficiency was disclosed. He went away sorrowful. So to call into exercise the pious emotions of the woman who besought the Lord to heal her daughter, at first he seemed not to notice her. As she continued her importunity he said, "It is not meet to take the children's bread and cast it to dogs." This apparently cold repulse broke up the fountains of her religious sensibility, and humility and faith flowed forth in the expression, "Truth, Lord, yet the dogs eat of the crumbs that fall from their master's table." The usefulness and success of a minister depend, in a great degree, under God, upon this nice adaptation of truth to characters.

IV. As a minister would hope for SUCCESS, let him give himself wholly to his work. The divine blessing upon our labors is usually proportioned to our devotedness. From lips that kiss an idol, exhortations fall powerless; while a conviction on

the part of an audience that their preacher counts all things but dross for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus, imparts weight to all he says and does. A faithful minister may doubtless have reason to mourn over the spiritual barrenness of his congregation; what else can an unfaithful minister expect? The *example* of one who resolves to know nothing but Christ and him crucified is a living sermon more powerful than words can express. To truth thus communicated, people cannot long remain indifferent. God gives increase to the planting and watering—not of Judas Iscariot, but of Paul and Apollos.

V. The remembrance of what CHRIST has endured to introduce on earth the ministry of reconciliation, should prove an incitement to exclusive devotion in his service. Does the love of applause, of worldly honor and of personal ease, tempt the minister to unfaithfulness? Let him visit the manager of Bethlehem and the cold mountains where at midnight his Master's prayers were offered; let him contemplate the Son of God sitting in the lowly habitations of poverty, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief, often not having where to lay his head; let him mark the readiness of the Saviour to resist every clamorous demand of appetite, every impulse of nature, that he might please Him on whose errand of mercy he became incarnate and entered our world. Yet when duty called he could urge his passage through a host of foes. On his way to Jerusalem going up to suffer death, he went *before* his disciples, and in the garden of Gethsemane, where the vitals of his Father's wrath against sin were poured upon his head, though shrinking humanity exclaimed, "let this cup pass me," he added, "nevertheless, (how much that word meant! "nevertheless,"—*notwithstanding all I endure, this bloody sweat, these excruciating agonies*'—" not *my* will, but *thine* be done." Through mockery and insult was he led to the execution, as a lamb to the slaughter; reviled and not reviling. As a sheep before the shearers is dumb, so he opened not his mouth. From his first breath in the manger to his last gasp on the cross, his aim was one; and never did the expiatory victim start back from the altar. Shall such a Saviour be put off with half our heart or half our services? Has he not a claim to our whole heart, soul, strength, and mind? From the heights of Calvary there comes a voice, *servant of the living God, minister of Christ, give thyself wholly to the work.*

VI. What infinite CONSEQUENCES are connected with the ministry! "We are," says the apostle, "a sweet savor of Christ in them that are saved and in them that perish; to the one we are a savor of life unto life, and to the other a savor of death unto death. Who is sufficient for these things?" The

minister of Christ deals with souls that are to exist through eternity. His labors are consummated in the bliss of heaven or in the miseries of hell. When time shall be no more, his name will be pronounced with gratitude or with execrations. Are such responsibilities to be thoughtlessly assumed or partially met?

VII. In view of the *solemn* ACCOUNT *to be rendered at the bar of God*, let the minister give himself wholly to his work. The day of judgment, to all an occasion of intense interest, will be peculiarly so to him who has been ordained to watch for souls. There will he meet the people of his charge, whether his ministrations contributed to their salvation or to their ruin. What an interview! Against the unfaithful minister what allegations will be preferred! To redeem the souls with whom he trifled, the blood of Him who now sits as Judge was poured out like water. How will one look of that Judge wither his strength! Unreproved, unwarned, were dying sinners left to go on in their trangrassions, and there stands the murderer who inflicted eternal death!

"He swore in sight of God
"And man to preach his Master, Jesus Christ,
"Yet preach'd himself; he swore that love of souls
"Alone had drawn him to the church, yet strewed
"The path that led to hell with tempting flowers;
"And in the ears of sinners, as they took
"The way to death he whispered peace.
"He has a wolf in clothing of the lamb,
"That stole into the fold of God, and on
"The blood of souls, which he did sell to death,
"Grew fat."

Lift thy head, devoted minister of Jesus, from thy long-pressed pillow in the grave, and shout, for thy redemption is come!—While we sojourned on earth, he approved himself "in much patience, in affliction, in necessities, in distresses, in labors, in watchings, in fastings, by pureness, by knowledge, by long-suffering, by kindness, by the Holy Ghost, by love unfeigned, by the word of truth, by the power of God, by the armor of righteousness on the right hand and on the left, by honor and dishonor, by evil report and good report,"—and now the vintage is come, and the fruits of his toils are to be gathered for eternal life; the award to be apportioned by the Master whom he conscientiously and devoutly served. The tenderness which distinguished the demeanor of the Saviour toward his disciples in his humiliation—those looks of familiar kindness—will still prevail above the rigid features of justice, as he says to the self-denying minister, I was an hungered and you gave me meat, thirsty and you gave me drink, a stranger and you took me in, sick and in prison and you came unto me. No law of nature is more firmly fixed than the affection of Christ to his children. Suns may be extinguished and worlds

annihilated, but the fire of redeeming love can never go out. Whether accused as a culprit at the bar of Pilate, or sitting as a judge to decide the destiny of the universe, whether mocked upon a cross or adored upon a throne, the Saviour's language to the daughter of Zion is,—thou has ravished my heart, my sister, my spouse. And on beholding the wounds in the hands, upon the temples, and in the side of his Redeemer, will not the approved minister of Christ, as he stands to be judged in the company of prophets, apostles, and martyrs, exclaim with Thomas, in tones of overflowing love and gratitude, "My Lord and my God," when saw I thee an hungered and gave thee meat, or thirsty and gave thee drink, a stranger and took thee in, or sick and in prison and came unto thee? From domes of worldly pomp, the votaries of wealth and fame may look sarcastically down upon the unassuming pastor in his peregrinations from house to house, speaking of Jesus and his salvation, comforting the sick and the afflicted, sustaining the feeble hands and the tottering knees; but how will it be at the judgment day? Who will be regarded as the wise man then?

What a divine employment is the Christian ministry! what an enviable character a faithful ambassador of the Saviour! how sublime his motives, how heavenly his hopes! whether on his knees in his closet, or over his books in his study; whether urging the claims of God from the pulpit or at the firesides of his people, his labors have reference to results unseen an eternal—crowns of glory that fade not away, for himself and for others—religion his business, God his portion, his shield, his exceeding great reward.

And is the world's regeneration, under God, committed entirely to the ministry? Has the CHURCH nothing to do? In order to the success of the ministry, the co-operation of the friends of the Redeemer, is indispensable. Without it, the hands of a pastor are comparatively weak. Nor do I allude here merely to a pecuniary competence, without which, of course, he cannot give himself wholly to his work. Such provision may be cheerfully made by a people, and yet assistance far more important be withheld.

Not a few who are accustomed to lead in social prayer-meetings, while almost every thing, from the river to the ends of the earth, is remembered, offer not a passing petition to God for their pastor; an omission it is to be feared resulting from a similar negligence in the closet; for what chiefly interests our minds in retirement will not be uniformly forgotten in public. How can a blessing be expected to follow the ministrations of the word, when the interest felt is too little to induce us to ask? Strange that the most efficient instrumentality appointed of God for saving sinners should be forgotten.

With a view to call the attention of a negligent people to this duty, a pastor once preached from the text—"Brethren, pray for us." Before a week elapsed he had evidence in his own experience, that the evil had ceased. He was strengthened in the inner man; his heart was drawn out toward Zion; and the next Sabbath the people percieved, from the increased fervor in his public performance, that their supplications had been heard. Would to God that Christians knew how much they lose by not praying for their minister; selfishness itself would lead to a reform.

Christians moreover may help their minister by visiting and conversing from house to house. By these visits a variety of desirable objects, all connected with the pastor's work, may be accomplished. Destitute families may be supplied with the Bible; temperance pledges may be taken; children may be gathered into Sabbath-schools; such as neglect public worship may be induced to attend church; sinners may be arrested in their mad career to endless death, and brought to consideration, and, through the influence of the Holy Ghost, to repentance. The gospel-leaven is thus diffused through a community; and until each Christian shall thus say to his neighbor and to his brother, "*know the Lord*,"—he will not be savingly known by all from the least to the greatest. Such Christian effort, systematically and periodically performed, is the pastor's strength, the church's life, and, under God, the sinner's hope.

Above all things let a minister be sustained in doing his work *faithfully*. In the animadversions of worldly men against plain and cutting exhibitions of truth let members of the church never join. Ministers may doubtless err; but too much zeal, if well directed, for the salvation of souls, is hardly possible. While sinners remain unconverted—exposed to hell, put no damper upon the ardor of your minister. Knowing the terrors of the Lord, let him persuade men; let him lift up his voice like a trumpet, and spare not. Sinners have but one probation, and if that be neglected they are gone for ever. Whether they will hear or forbear the whole truth without disguise, must be proclaimed. Nay, though the professing disciples of Christ should cry, *hold*—as a minister of Christ, he must do his duty—fulfil his commission. An awful account has he to render; tempt him not to heal the hurt of the people slightly. No, brethren, help him to press the weapon home to the conscience; *all* is depending—eternity is at stake; 'tis but an hour, and every thing is lost or gained. But I forbear! Other duties might be specified; for indeed there is scarcely a department of labor where a pastor may not, either directly or indirectly, be aided by his church, or where

aid is not needed.

In view of the tender relations of nature sustained by the speaker to the pastor elect,* may I not be indulged in a few remarks of personal address?—My son, I meet you here to-day under circumstances next in interest to those which will exist at the judgment-seat of Christ. I know and feel that I shall see you there. My one wish, paramount to all others respecting you, is that by a life of self-denying labor, you may there secure the approbation of your Judge. In recognizing you on this occasion as a minister of Jesus Christ, a thousand moving recollections rush over me. You were a child of many prayers. Lips now silent in the grave, at the midnight hour, have implored the blessing of God, the unction of the Holy Ghost upon you; hearts now exulting before the throne in heaven have swelled with the desire that you might be called of God to the work in which you are engaged. I have watched over your steps with gratitude—for they were ever th steps of a dutiful son—from your infancy and childhood to thi good hour, when I am permitted, through the blessing of the God of your fathers, to encounter you at the very point where all my earthly wishes respecting you centered. I had rather have you a humble minister of Jesus Christ, though poor and suffering, than to see you the occupant of a kingly throne. But what, my son, art thou, or what is thy father's house, that we should thus stand here to-day!—poor sinners, deserving of nothing but hell. Shall I call on you to honor the memory of your ancestors, who, for many generations, have been preachers of the Gospel? No—I call on you to be true to Christ, to give yourself wholly to your work. Yet remember the cloud of witnesses who have gone before you, and have already attained the prize after which you aspire. Enoch Noah, the prophets, the apostles, thousands of martyrs and reformers, Swartz, Brainerd, Elliot, (from the last of whom you are of lineal descent,) beckon you on to victory. Be a good soldier. The Lord Jesus Christ, who was himself a minister, has said, "Lo, I am with you always, till the world shall end." Nail that promise to your heart, it will sustain you under every trial and difficulty, till you shall be summoned away to mingle in the general assembly and church of the first born, whose names are written in heaven. If we are engaged in our Master's business, how soon that summons comes it matters not. Death has once and again broken in upon our family group, and who may be next, God only knows. We are travelers here through a thorny maze, going home to your great and happy meeting. So run that you may win.

*Preached at the installation of a son.

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SERMON CCLXI.

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NORWALK, CONN.

SUBMISSION TO CIVIL AUTHORITY.

1ST. PET. ii, 13 -17.—Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake; whether it be to the king, as supreme; or unto governors, as unto them that are sent by him for the punishment of evil-doers, and for the praise of them that do well. For so is the will of God, that with well-doing ye may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men: as free, and not using your liberty for a cloak of maliciousness, but as the servants of God. Honor all men. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the King.

THE duty here inculcated is that of submission to civil authority. We shall notice,

I. The ground on which the scriptures rest the obligation to obedience.

II. Inquire to what extent obedience is required.

I. The ground on which the scriptures rest the obligation to obedience.

Why must I obey the laws of the land? "Because," say some, "in entering into society, you promised to yield to the conditions of that society." The people are supposed to have assembled; to have yielded, each, a portion of his natural rights; to have established some form of polity, under which the government assumed certain responsibilities, and the people promised, to a certain extent, obedience.

By others this theory has been rejected as inadequate and unsound. There never was such a compact. A fiction conveys no rights and imposes no obligation. If there had been such a compact, it might be just as difficult to tell why the individuals who made it were obliged to keep their engagements, as to answer the original question. Suppose a hundred men had stood

out against the compact, and reserved all their original rights; are they under no obligation to forbear such acts as by the laws of the newly-formed community are prohibited, as theft, robbery, arson and murder? Can we suppose that men coming together from a state of nature, with all their original rights, are competent to form a scheme of polity under which such acts shall be declared lawful and right? Has the community, in fine, a right to come together, and, (even if unanimous,) to dislove all obligations, annul all law, and declare it right for every one to do whatever suits his pleasure? Is there no obligation, back of all this voluntary compact, which conscience acknowledges, which no mind can ever shake off, and from which no agreement among men can absolve the soul?

We need not have gone so far to show the absurdity of this theory of compact. When we inquire after the obligation to abide by the supposed compact, it is perceived at once that the obligation is shifted back to remoter ground.

The question remains: "Why am I obliged to yield obedience to the laws of the land?" "Because," answers another, "you will be punished if you do not." Am I, then, a brute, without reason, without honor, without conscience? If I can hope to rob or murder with impunity, may I as well do it as let it alone? If I can successfully evade or resist the penalty of the law, am I guiltless in disobeying it? Is there no right or wrong about it, save only the consideration of punishment? I am inquiring after that right to punish, and that obligation to obey, which makes the failure to obey *guilt*—such as should distress my conscience and cover me with shame. If a foreign tyrant overruns our country, plunders, devastates, butchers, lays our altars, firesides and laws in ruins, there comes no shame or remorse to the noble band who stand in the breach and jeopard their lives in defence of their homes and their country. Why not? If they are overcome and perish on the scaffold, they perish without shame and without remorse. Why so? It is not enough to bind conscience under an obligation of obedience, to show her that punishment will be the consequence of disobedience. She does not acknowledge the maxim that might gives right, and that weakness imposes obligation. Compulsion and obligation are different terms in her vocabulary.

On what, then, rests the obligation to civil authority? On the ground that it is the will of God. Here is authority to

which reason bows, and conscience submits. If that be a first principle which the soul feels instinctively; for which she requires no proof and no instruction, and which she cannot shake off if she would; then this is a first principle; to obey God is right; to disobey God is wrong; and that because he is God; and his will, the will of perfect wisdom and perfect goodness. Conscience so decides, and cannot decide otherwise.

That God wills the establishment and maintenance of civil authority, we might gather from the light of nature, and from the lessons of experience; but argument is unnecessary. God has declared it in his word. "The powers that be are ordained of God. Whosoever, therefore, resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God; and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation." "Wherefore, ye must needs be subject, not only for wrath, but also for conscience sake." "Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man, for the Lord's sake; for so is the will of God, that with well-doing ye may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men."

The importance of the question concerning the obligation to obedience is this: Other grounds of obligation are fictitious and atheistic; they take no hold upon the conscience; they are created by a breath, and by a breath are they destroyed. They are no foundations on which to rest a nation's virtue and a nation's peace; they are utterly powerless in time of need. This binds the conscience. This takes hold upon the soul and its eternal destinies. You are bound, not simply because you have promised; whether you have promised or not, you are bound. You are under obligation, not simply because you will meet with civil pains and penalties if you disobey. God will punish you, if you shuffle yourself away from the vengeance of civil authority; and when you have suffered the penalty which human laws inflict, you have a still more dreadful account to answer at the bar of God.

You perceive, here, into what a dreadful error those fall who contrive to do the very thing which the laws prohibit, while they do it in such a way that, owing to the technicalities of law, they cannot be punished. They may keep out of the reach of the civil power, but they fall into the hands of the living God; and that under the double guilt of disobedience and fraud. Many a villain has rejoiced in the success of such an evasion of law, while, in evading the law, he has brought upon his soul

the damnation of hell. Of this nature are all those villainous contrivances for evading the laws concerning the sale of intoxicating drinks; evasions to which, it should seem, none but the most abandoned of the vile could ever descend. Of this nature are those evasions of the laws concerning usury. Many seem to think that there is no guilt in doing these things; and that they may do them, provided they are willing to risk the penalty. But if human laws sleep, the law of God does not. These gains are, like the gains of Judas, the wages of iniquity. If not the price of blood, they are the barter taken for integrity, for duty to the law, and for the salvation of the soul. This is what they gain who deal in arts of evasion and shuffling with law. It is no game of chance—win or lose; no matter what the immediate issue, only try the game and you forfeit your soul.

But if evasions of law are so dangerous, what shall be said of the open and palpable disregard to law which is sometimes witnessed? What shall be said of the wanton disregard of such laws as those made for the defence of suffering humanity, and for the protection of the virtue and the peace of the community—by prohibiting, save under certain regulations, the traffic in intoxicating drinks? Magistrates, upon whose souls rests the oath of God, may be unfaithful to their trust; jurors may trample on their oaths; the community may wickedly endure the wrong; but all together will be confronted with the widow and the fatherless at the bar of God; and how think ye this unfaithfulness to the authority of law will fare at that tribunal? If "the stone shall cry out of the wall, and the beam out of the timber shall answer it," against him that "coveteth an evil covetousness" to his house, by thriving on the gains of an unlawful and murderous traffic; how will the voice of the betrayed law, and the voice of violated oaths, mingle with the cries of widows and orphans against the unfaithful magistrates who bear the sword in vain, and against the community that silently tolerate the wrong? Will there be no account in the judgment for such things as these?

Having shown the foundation upon which the scriptures rest the obligation of obedience, we inquire,

2. To what extent obedience is due. "Without limit," say some; and back up their declaration by repeating the passages: "submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's

sake: whoso resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God." This doctrine goes against all resistance to arbitary power; against all non-conformity to civil or religious establishments; it annihilates all constitutional rights, and gives the world over to hopeless despotism.

As our Puritan fathers resisted such claims, as our fathers of the Revolution rebelled against them, and as the people of these United States deem such sentiments subversive of all political and religious freedom, it becomes a matter of interest for us to inquire whether for all this we are liable to be condemned at the bar of God. Are we, and were all our fathers wrong on this fundamental principle?

What is the design of these scriptures, which enjoin obedience to civil authority. Is it to enjoin submission in general, or do they speak especially of the extent of a submission whose obligation in general is not doubted? The questions are entirely distinct: Is submission a duty? Is unlimited submission a duty? If a child inquires, "Must I obey my father?" I answer, yes, and repeat the authority—"Children, obey your parents in all things." He goes away, and the next news I hear is, that his abandoned father has ordered him to commit murder, and he has obeyed. I talk with him, and try to show him the enormity of his guilt. He replies, "Sir, you taught me that it was my duty to obey my father, and I have but obeyed the word of God, which requires me to obey my father 'in all things.'" These are the words of scripture; they teach the duty of filial obedience; but they do not teach an unlimited obedience, to the destruction of the authority of the great moral law of God. It is altogether a perversion of these words of scripture to allege them in justification of the crime of murder. So in the present instance; if the design of the scripture is to teach the duty of obedience, it by no means follows, of course, that they teach unlimited obedience.

The passages to which we have referred are evidently treating of the duty of submission in general; they are not agitating the question of unlimited submission.

We have numerous approved examples to the contrary of such a doctrine. The rulers, elders and scribes, with the high-priest, once commanded the apostles not to speak at all, nor teach in the name of Jesus. The apostles took no exception to the authority of the tribunal, as not being the proper body to

take cognizance of proper matters; they would have yielded to no authority. They simply answered: "Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye." They disobeyed the mandate.

When Nebuchadnezzar commanded Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego to fall down and worship the golden image, they replied: "We are not careful to answer thee in this matter: Be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou set up." God delivered them from the fiery furnace, and justified their disobedience.

Daniel chose to be cast into the lions' den, rather than yield obedience to a command that put it at his option either to give up his religion or lose his life. God justified his disobedience, and delivered him.

When Jeroboam set up priests "for the high places, and for the devils, and for the calves which he had made," most of the ten tribes submitted to his new institutions, and God punished them for yielding obedience, because they "left all the commandments of the Lord their God," in obeying this ordinance of man.

For disobedience to human laws, when human laws conflict with the laws of God, it is a sufficient justification to say, as Peter did when called to an account by the Jewish Sanhedrim, "We ought to obey God rather than man." The Bible is no instrument of tyranny. The firmest, boldest, most enlightened champions of freedom have been such as submitted their consciences to the word of God. But while the Bible is the best friend to liberty, it is also the best friend to law and the surest support of civil authority. A consistent Christian can never be a turbulent citizen. A Christian community will always be a community of order and law. If Christian missionaries follow the instructions and the examples of apostles, they will never encourage their converts to attempt a subversion of the government under which they live. If they go to the Sandwich Islands, to Persia, to Turkey, or Siam, they will never make a direct assault upon the civil institutions of the land, however absurd and despotic they may be. Christianity will break the yoke of thraldom, but it acts upon civil institutions only as an alternative, by a silent, gradual, irresistible impulse. Upon the individual soul the gospel is like a fire and a hammer;

political and civil improvements are fruits which it does not attempt to gather before they are ripe.

But if the scriptures furnish instances of approved resistance to human authority, let it be remembered that these were cases where human authority came into direct conflict with the rights of conscience and with the law of God. The warrant of disobedience should be of a nature like this, and undeniably plain. We must be able to plead that we could not yield obedience without rebellion against obligations of higher and paramount authority. In such a land as this, where those who make laws are to share in their operation; where those who make and those who execute the laws are soon to return to the common level, and are at any moment liable to impeachment and removal; where there is an independent judiciary ready to step in between the humblest citizen and the exercise of arbitrary power, or the operation of unconstitutional law; where no man is condemned without a trial by a jury of his countrymen, or without the aid of learned counsel to secure him whatever advantage there may be in any, the least, irregularity in the prosecution;—what plea in the wide world can be brought to justify disobedience to law, or the withholding of the deference due to the proper authorities? If they who "resisted the power" under the despotism of Nero "resisted the ordinance of God, and should receive to themselves damnation," what vengeance will God visit upon him who is a contemner of law under such a government as this?

In conclusion, it is proper briefly to advert to a few things incompatible with the spirit of these instructions.

1. All captious railing at the properly constituted authorities is inconsistent with these commands, if not indeed directly prohibited. "Honor all men: Honor the king;" or, by implication, treat all in authority with the respect due to their office. "Render to all their dues: Honor to whom honor." A Christian citizen should always be pleased with the management of the powers that be, where it is possible to be so, and be true to the constitution and best interests of the country. Captious fault-finding is not only prohibited by the scripture under consideration; it defeats its own end. The boy in the fable who was always crying out, "The wolf," "The wolf," was not believed when the wolf came in earnest. So captious fault-finding defeats its own end, and renders it the

more difficult to correct the evil when evil really exists.

2. This injunction of holy writ is scandalously disobeyed in those caricatures with which reckless partisans on either side assail the leaders of the opposite party, and especially the magistrates of the land. Oh what monuments of a nation's shame! What marks of loose morality, of corrupt taste, and of low scurrility, are those dishonorable prints that appear so often in the windows of the shops, and attach themselves so prominently to the walls of places of public resort! What a shame to a community it is, that self-respect and good taste—not to say respectable morality—do not thunder out in a voice that will not be disobeyed, take these things hence; let not the purveyors of politics and amusements cater for us as though we were a nation of blackguards.

Finally, nothing can be more directly incompatible with the spirit of these injunctions, than that usurpation of the functions of civil authority, which has so often been witnessed in our country in these days of excitement. The thief, the highwayman, the assassin, may plunder property and destroy life. But they do not strike at the foundations of all order and all law. They who take it upon themselves to administer what has been termed "Lynch law," are destroying the very foundations of all security for property or life. No other acts are so deadly to civil liberty. All history shows that a few short months of such misrule are enough to make a people tired of a government of law in form, but of the despotism of the mob in fact. The only remedy ever found, when such disorders could not be repressed, has been to hand over the liberties of the people into the keeping of a master. Anarchy is always, and of necessity, followed by despotism. If there be any crime that deserves to be punished with death, for the mischief which it works, it is the crime of usurping the perogative of law;—joining with the mob, in the assumption of all the powers of lawgiver, judge, jury, accuser, witnesses, executioner. There is no greater foe to his country or to man, than the one who joins in a mob or abets it:—save perhaps the perjured magistrate who forbears to do his utmost to put it down. No matter what the cause; no matter how odious the conduct of them against whom the popular tumult is stirred; such things must cease, or we need no other judgments of God to bring us to speedy ruin.

Now, our duties in all these matters, are matters of religious concern. God requires them. If we fail in these, he will bring us to account in the day of judgment. It may be that some among us have thought this field of civil duties exempt from the supervision of the law of God. If so, oh fatal mistake! Let us see to it that we have, in this department of duty, no accounts with God left unsettled till the judgment; for "God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil."

SERMON CCLXII.

BY REV. EDWIN HALL.

TRUE FREEDOM.

JOHN viii. 36.—If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed.

THERE are those who imagine that the religion of Christ is made up of little else than unwelcome and onerous restraints. "The truth shall make you free?" They think, rather, that if Christianity be truth, it will bind them, and fetter them, and make this pleasant earth in the pleasant light of the sun henceforth a gloomy prison. If, for fear of worse evils, they think of turning to Christ before they die, they think of it as putting off their liberty, and taking up a yoke, which, for its own sake, they would never choose to bear.

The Lord Jesus Christ, however, declares that this "yoke is easy" and his "burden is light," He declares that if we "know the truth, the truth shall make us free;" and that, if the Son shall make us free, we shall be free indeed."

He does not mean that he has no laws. He has laws, which are to be obeyed under the most dreadful of all penalties. He does not mean that his yoke is easy and his burden light, because he requires little and gives large indulgences. He requires much. He gives not the least indulgence to the least transgression of any one of all his commandments. He requires perfect obedience.

The wonder with many is, how men can come fully under this holy government of Christ, and yet be free.

The wonder is, how those who are completely subdued to this authority are said to be "called unto liberty;" and to be brought into the "glorious liberty of the children of God."

Now, how is this? Why are not our "Free-thinkers," as they vaunt themselves, the true freemen? Why are not the men who scoff at all religion, the truly free; and, what they claim to be, the best friends of liberty, having, of all things, the greatest horror of religious restraints, lest they should in time grow into a coalition of church and state, or into something else equally destructive of freedom?

In order to arrive at just views concerning these matters, we will

I. Inquire into the proper idea of liberty; and

II. Show that the liberty wherewith Christ maketh free is true freedom.

1. The proper idea of liberty.

I once heard an aged man, who had kept a dram-shop unlawfully, inveigh with great bitterness against the law that punished him, and against the men who were instrumental in bringing him to justice. "I fought for liberty," exclaimed he; "I have a right to do what I please." "This is a free country."

The notion appears to be becoming quite common, that, in a free country, every man ought to be allowed to do just what he pleases, and that just so far as this license is curtailed, freedom is taken away. Many seem to think there is no freedom unless men can be free from all obligation, human or divine.

It is to be granted, that every man ought to be allowed to do what he pleases, provided he pleases not to do what is wrong in itself, or what injures his neighbor or the community. From doing what is in itself a moral wrong the laws of God ought to prohibit him; from working mischief to his neighbor, to society, or to the state, the laws of man ought to restrain him. These laws should be armed with penalties sufficient to coerce the lawless and the disobedient. This is freedom. Without this there is no freedom.

If a company are on ship-board in the middle of the ocean, I suppose no one would be allowed to blow up the ship, or sink

it, under the notion of having a right to do what he pleases. No one of the ship's company would think his freedom infringed upon, if debarred from setting the ship on fire; or from throwing the provisions overboard; or from drenching them with sea water; or from maiming his shipmates, or throwing them overboard; or from furnishing strong drink to those who manage the ship, and who are known to be grossly addicted to intoxication. A man complain that his liberty is infringed upon, because he is debarred from doing these things! No. If he has a particle of common sense he will see that his liberty consists in these laws, which do not so much restrain him as defend him, and secure to him freedom to preserve his life, and to use it in the pursuit of happiness. It would be proper for that ship's company to make additional laws concerning their general policy:—for example,—that none should use fire carelessly; that in a savage port none should leave the ship, or engage in traffic, save under certain regulations; and these regulations do but enlarge and secure freedom, provided they are wise and good. None but a villain could desire a liberty to do these things which such regulations forbid. To none other would they be any restraint. "The law is not made for a righteous man." It is no restraint or embarrassment to him. The law is made "for the lawless and disobedient." If any number should be disposed to do what such regulations forbid, then law is needed; and its arm should be strong. If there may be no law; or, if the law may not be enforced, then there is no longer liberty, nor is life itself desirable. That fated ship would be but a floating hell; and the sooner some explosion rends it to atoms, or some conflagration consumes it, or some tempest hurls it to the bottom of the ocean, the greater the mercy to its wretched inhabitants. There is no liberty—there is no living without law.

Every community is in the condition of that ship upon the ocean; save only that, in a community upon land, there is no tornado, nor conflagration to prove the last refuge from anarchy. There is no deep to open her mouth in mercy and put an end at once to the community and its miseries. Here law is doubly important; and if there may not be law, there must be despotism or lingering ruin. If any sober man were to form a plan of a community, ordered under the fullest regard to liberty, he would not allow treason, or murder, or theft, or perjury, or arson, or kidnapping, or forgery. Why not? If he has fought for liberty, and means to be free, why not allow people to do as they please in such matters? It would destroy freedom. Allow every man to do as he pleases in the simple matter of punishing those who injure or insult him, as he thinks they deserve, and there is no freedem. No one has any longer any liberty to speak his opinion, or to utter or publish most wholesome and necessary truths. No one can be safe in pursuing his own righteous business, or in seeking hi

own happiness. The absence of law destroys his freedom. Law gives him his rights; law secures them. Law gives him his liberty; law secures it. He has no rights; he has no liberty without law. Let reason answer, whether he who demands the liberty of doing what he pleases, without the restraints of law, is a friend of liberty.

The old man, who had "fought for liberty," did not consider how the law which forbade him to keep a tippling house, defended him and the rest of the community from pauper taxes, and from the mischiefs of a general licentiousness. He did not consider to how many families such a law was even more necessary than one to protect them from violence or murder. He did not consider that, but for such a law, there might soon be no librrty; that a corrupt people might soon sell him and his children, and his whole country into the hands of despots; or worse, that general licentiousness and depravation of principle would take away the liberty of travelling the highways in safety; of working in the fields in security; or even of lying down in the bed at night without the danger of being murdered and burnt up before morning. The old man had "fought for liberty," and surely, had he thought a little further, his patriot soul would have been ready to enter the field once more, to contend for the liberty of law. Sure, he would not have taken part with the enemies of his country in the revolution, and why should he now?

The people of this country, for the very puopose of enlarging and enjoying their liberties, have framed for themselves laws. We have laws against blasphemy and profane swearing; laws against printing or distributing obscene books;—against purchasing them, or introducing them into schools or families; laws against lewdness; laws against lotteries, or selling lottery tickets; laws against horse-racing, or abetting the same; laws against gaming; against selling playing-cards, or having them in possession for sale; laws against taverners keeping any implements used in gaming; laws against making or using any circus of any description; laws against mountebanks and tumblers, and against suffering such persons to exhibit their tricks in our houses;—in fine, the people of this land have found it indispensable to the possession and enjoyment of liberty, to have regulations of law on all subjects touching wrongs against persons or their property; on all subjects touching the public policy or the public morals. Who is it that pleads that all these laws should be swept away, under the notion of enlarging our liberties? What honest man and good citizen feels his liberties infringed upon by these laws? Who but villains want a liberty to do the things which these laws forbid?

The principle illustrated by these views, is this:—that wise and necessary laws are not inconsistent with liberty, but essential to it: that liberty to do in a community what every one may please to do, without any restraint of law, is an absurdity;

that both righteousness and mercy demand that wise and just laws be armed with penalties amply sufficient to coerce the wicked. Such a government of law is the only perfect and the only possible freedom.

The same holds true, in relation to the government of God. Admit that his laws are "holy and just and good," and they are not only not incompatible with perfect freedom, but essential to it. No righteous and benevolent being will desire to do what these laws forbid. To righteous and benevolent beings, therefore, they are no restraint or incumbrance. If any desire to indulge in unrighteousness and malevolence, then laws are indispensible, and must be maintained by adequate penalties, if the great Jehovah is just and good. The highes offence in any community, is that which strikes at the foundations of government. If God, therefore, were to tolerate impiety towards himself, this would be to tolerate contempt and disloyalty towards the supreme Ruler and his whole authority. And if these "Foundations be destroyed, what can the righteous do?" There is no power beyond His throne; there is no future existence beyond the life to come, to which the groaning world may look for relief. Offences against our neighbor may be heinous, but as offences against our neighbor, they are only partial and limited wrongs. Their damning guilt, is their relation to the law and the authority of God. As sin, they strike at the foundation of all government and all happiness. In this light, simple impiety rises into an evil which nothing less than infinite can measure. Sin, the offence against God; is the deepest guilt that can darken the character of man; the most heinous wrong which the universe knows. It is with infinite reason that the "First and the great commandment" requires piety to God; and that in the eye of divine law, no virtue, no goodness, nothing but entire and damning corruption is attributed to beings destitute of piety to God. Nor does it appear that the perdition to wbich divine justice dooms the incorrigibly wicked, is at all worse, even for the wicked themselves, than it would be to sweep away the divine laws; or, which is the same thing, to sweep away their awful sanctions.

And these laws are "holy, just, and good." No upright, pure-minded being can possibly feel that they infringe upon his liberty. They forbid nothing in which he desires to be allowed; they require nothing from which he would desire to be excused.

Does any one of you think it essential to his freedom, that he be allowed to lie, to deceive, and to defraud? Does your idea of liberty involve a notion that you ought to be allowed to be revengeful and malicious, a slanderer, a thief, or a murderer, ? Does your notion of liberty demand a freedom to contemn God? to blaspheme his holy name? to scoff at his authority, to set at naught his laws? Is your heart so disposed, that you feel your

liberty infringed upon by the prohibition of such things? Would you use the liberty, if the prohibition were removed? Have you no love, no virtue, does nothing but the terror of Hell deter you from the perpretration of such wrongs? Would you feel freer and happier, if such things were tolerated in the government of God? Who wants a liberty to hate the truth, to hate righteousness, and to be impious? Who is it that finds it essential to his happiness, to have such a license permanent and universal? Miserable man! Is there nothing that can give full loose to the feelings of your heart, but to hate, and to destroy all righteousness; to destroy the laws, and overturn the very throne of God? Is this your freedom! Is this your good? It is even so, "The carnal mind is enmity against God." Wonder not that there are laws! Wonder not that there is a hell!

And what do our "Free-thinkers" want? The liberty of thinking that falsehood is truth, and truth is falsehood—that truths proved by demonstration are doubtful, if they threaten evil to evil-doers? Do they want a freedom to think that two and two are not four; that there are no seas nor mountains upon the earth; that the worlds do not move; that in the machinery of the heavens, and in the beauties of the earth there are no tokens of the knowledge and power, and skill, and taste, and goodness of the Creator? freedom to think that there is no right, there is no wrong, there is no truth, no error, no reason, in the universe?

For my part, I know not what free thinking is, save to be free to love and pursue the truth; I know not what freedom is, but to love and obey the Lord. If it were forbidden to love truth, to hate falsehood, to be grateful, to be kind, to follow the dictates of reason, or to live at peace with our own conscience, this would be an infringement upon liberty. If it were required of us to blaspheme the adorable name of God, or to be undutiful to him as our sovereign; this would be tyranny. It would be hard living under a government which should forbid us to love God or our neighbor. But to require what is right, and to forbid what is wrong, is no curtailment of liberty, unless, indeed, some one should wish a liberty to be an enemy of all righteousness, and a child of the devil. But this is not liberty. It is not a change from bondage to freedom, but from freedom to bondage. "Know ye not, that his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?" The desires of an evil heart are now the masters of the soul that has thought it freedom to break away from the government of God. He is "sold under sin;" "led captive by Satan at his will." He is not free to love and obey the truth. His imperious lusts will not allow him to follow his own better judgment. He often struggles with his appetites, like a captive who would have liberty or death; but chey drag him along, force him into warfare with

his conscience and with God, make his soul a cage for every unclean bird, and finally compel him to sacrifice honor, integrity, life, and his very salvation, to a bondage from which he shall not be free till he dies, nor while eternity endures. He is in "the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity."

We have now looked at these things sufficiently to h formed proper ideas of the nature of true freedom.

II. The liberty wherewith Christ maketh free is true freedom.

He brings us under the government of law, but it is "the perfect law of liberty;" liberty to love man and to love God; liqerty to follow the dictates of reason and of conscience; liberty to pursue our highest dignity, and our highest good; entire freedom to trample ander our feet every fetter of vice, and every bond of Satan and of sin. Follow his instructious, and every veil of prejudice and error shall be removed; every delusion, every snare shall be revealed. He will teach us how to break every yoke, and how to vanquish every enemy. "Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." He will bring us into the "glorious liberty of the children of God;" and yet the children of God are under law. Heaven itself is under law. The law that reigns there is perfect. Obedience is perfect. All disobedience is excluded. Every desire is conformed to the law. This is true freedom; this is perfect liberty.

More particularly, the way in which the Son of God makes us free is this:—

1. He opens the prison doors. We were already condemned; convicts shut up, without the possibility of escape, to be brought forth only to execution. The world was but a prison. Ascend to heaven, make our bed in hell, dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, it was impossible to flee from the presence of an offended God. It would be impossible to escape his notice amid the convulsions of the last day. The earth would melt with fervent heat; the heavens would pass away with a great noise; but the eye of God would be upon every guilty soul, and he could by no means escape. The pity of all created beings could not save him. No cries, no tears could dispose the Judge to reverse or abate his heavy sentence. But "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us." He came "to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound." Fellow, sinner, if the Son shall make you free, you shall be free indeed; if not, there is no other arm that can save; there is no other redemption for your soul.

2. He breaks our fetters. By his spirit, he slays the sins that have kept us in bondage. We are no longer to be led captive at the will of Satan. We are to be no longer the servants of sin. We feel that a heavy load is taken off. As a man who had been pinioned for years, feels relieved when his

manacles are broken, so the soul that has been delivered from the dominion of sin feels light, and in the possession of a freedom of which it had formed no conception before.

3. He sets us free; by creating in us a new heart; and renewing in us a right spirit. Now we loathe the bondage which we loved. Now we understand the excellency of his laws; now we love them. Now we "hunger and thirst after righteousness." We feel that we shall be satisfied when we are completely renewed after the image of him who created us, and made completely holy. The laws of Christ are no restraint to us now we love the things which the law requires; we abhor the things which it forbids. We want no other liberty. We should abhor ourselves if we could use any other liberty.

So Christ makes free; not by annulling law; not by lowering down the demands of law; not by disarming the law; but by redeeming us from its curse; by disposing us to love righteousness and spontaneously to pursue the path which the law requires. Our reason, our conscience, our inclination, all agree with the law. We are delivered from the misgivings, the self-condemnation, and the fears of them that are in bondage to sin. But,

4. He admits us to the glorious franchise of the "sons of God." "The servant abideth not in the house forever." The servant of sin is not to abide in this earthly house of God forever; much less in that building of God eternal in the heavens. As an undutiful and wicked servant is to be turned away in disgrace and sorrow; so the sinner is to be driven away from the presence of God. The time of retribution will come; "and they shall gather out of his kingdom all them that offend, and them that work iniquity; and shall cast them into a furnace of fire; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth." "But the Son abideth forever." They whom Christ maketh free are henceforth privilged with the franchise of sons. They are to abide in the house of their father. They shall go no more out. They shall receive an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away. Oh the liberty wherewith Christ maketh free! Oh the eternal chains and darkness reserved for them who wear the chains of sin upon the earth! Dying fellow sinner, wilt thou be released from bondage? Wilt thou be delivered from condemnation? Wilt thou be saved from everlasting captivity in an eternal prison? Wilt thou be enfranchised with the glorious liberty of the children of God? Christ can make you free. He died for you. He has compassion on you. Come to him: come in all your pollution; come with all your guilt and chains upon you; only come, repenting and believing, and you shall be set free.

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SERMON CCLXIII.

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PROFANATION OF THE SABBATH.

Nehemiah xiii. 17, 18.—*Then I contended with the nobles of Judah, and said unto them, What evil thing is this that ye do, and profane the Sabbath day? Did not your fathers thus, and did not our God bring all this evil upon us and upon this city? Yet ye bring more wrath upon Israel, by profaning the Sabbath.*

Almost a century had elapsed, after the decree of Cyrus authorizing the captive Jews in Babylon to return to Jerusalem, when Nehemiah was commissioned by Artaxerxes to preside as governor over their civil concerns; and, during all this time, so feeble were their resources, and so many were the difficulties and enemies against which they struggled, that even the walls of the city were but very partially rebuilt. By the blessing of God on his administration, their affairs soon assumed a brighter aspect. The walls were completed, their enemies were overawed, civil and ecclesiastical order was restored, and the people were rejoicing in their safe and prosperous re-establishment in their native Zion. Still, events soon showed how important to a community may be the presence of a single man of wisdom and firmness. After twelve years' residence in Jerusalem, Nehemiah had occasion to be absent for a short time at the Persian court; and almost immediately, as it would seem, disorder ensued. Among other irregularities, profanation of the Sabbath became frequent and flagrant. The husbandmen trod their wine-presses and brought in their corn; the carriers loaded their asses with wine, grapes, figs, and all manner of burdens; and the market-men of Tyre

brought fish and all kinds of wares and sold them to the people, on that holy day. Such, he was pained to see on his return, were the consequences of a lax administration; and he immediately applied the proper remedy. He first went to the nobles of Judah and remonstrated with them on the subject; charged them directly with the sin, because, though it was committed by others, this was done by thier connivance; reminded them of the judgments of God upon the nation, from which they were scarcely delivered, for this very thing; and warned them that they were bringing down more wrath upon Israel. He also directly exerted his own authority to restrain the evil, and associated others with him. His exertions seems to have been successful; and the good effects, we have reason to believe, were lasting; for, in after ages, the Jews, as is well known, were exact, even to superstition, in the observation of the Sabbath.

This part of sacred history has been suggested to me by the profanations of the Sabbath which have lately become so frequent and bold among ourselves. I refer more particularly to the heavy-loaded wagons and other vehicles, which are driven along our streets almost every Sabbath, and at almost every hour of the day. I do not know that this form of Sabbath-breaking is in reality more common among us, or more flagrant, than some others; but it is more open to observation, and on that account, more shocking. It moved the spirit of Nehemiah, not so much that the men of Tyre sold their fish and wares on the Sabbath, which, in consideration of their being heathen, they might be expected to do, as that they sold them "to the men of Judah," the visible worshippers of God, and "in Jerusalem," the seat of his worship; coming up to the very threshhold of his house with their merchandise, as if in contempt of his presence and authority. So, it seems to me, our spirits ought to be moved to witness such profanations of the Sabbath, as those to which I have referred you in this professedly Christian country; and, to be more particular, in New England, and among the descendants of the puritans; around the graves of those venerable men who so much reverenced the Sabbath, and along the precincts of these sanctuaries of God, where they taught their children to assemble with them for his worship.

But we have a more serious concern in this matter than merely to vent our indignation against "the men of Tyre." Our first and main concern is to see that our own garments are clean. Nor is it sufficient that our habits, in respect to our personal observation of the Sabbath, are correct. In this respect the nobles of Judah, for aught

that appears, were without fault. Yet Nehemiah did not hesitate to charge them with the guilt of the profanations which they witnessed. "What evil thing is this that *ye do*," said he, "and profane the Sabbath day?" He said this on the assumption that they had the power to prevent the sin, and were answerable for the consequences of their neglect; and by this means, he said, they were not only incurring guilt on themselves, but were bringing wrath upon the city. Did not our fathers thus, and did not our God bring all this evil upon us, and upon this city? yet ye bring more wrath upon Israel by profaning the the Sabbath. Hence I derive the sentiment, that,

MEN OF AUTHORITY AND INFLUENCE INCUR GREAT GUILT, AND BRING WRATH UPON THE COMMUNITY, BY CONNIVING AT PROFANATIONS OF THE SABBATH.

I say men of authority and *influence*, because, in all countries, and more especially under a free government like ours, where the people are the source of power, men in authority can do but little unsupported by men of influence. As men of all classes have their share of influence, the responsibility rests, in a measure, upon all. With us, the common people, in respect to legislative power and moral responsibility as attached to that power, are "the nobles." At the same time, it is manifest that, by whatever means the influence of individuals is increased, their responsibility also is enhanced. Therefore I speak of men of authority, and men of influence by whatever cause, as being together and especially concerned in this matter; and they connive at the sin, when they forbear to do what they can to prevent or restrain it;—men of authority, when they forbear to exert their official power for this purpose; and men of influence, though not clothed with authority, when they forbear to exert that influence in such ways as belong to their sphere. And that in so doing, they incur great guilt before God and bring wrath upon the community, may appear from such considerations as the following:

1. *Profanation of the Sabbath is a great sin.* The Sabbath is a divine institution. At the creation, "God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it," because that in it he rested from all his work which he created and made; thus, by his express appointment, setting it apart from a common to a sacred use. This appointment he confirmed and renewed at Mount Sinai, saying, "Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy;" thus, in the terms of the enactment, referring us to the institution at the creation. As a further proof of its

universal obligation, our Saviour, by the authority vested by him in his apostles, added his sanction to the appointment, and made it a law of his kingdom after the obligation of the Jewish ritual had ceased, with only the circumstantial change of the first instead of the seventh in the series, as the day of rest, in commemoration of his resurrection.

Not only is the Sabbath ordained by the authority of God, but it is consecrated peculiarly to his service. He claims it as being especially his own. The seventh day, he declares, is the "Sabbath of the Lord thy God." So also, by apostolical authority, we are instructed to call the Christian Sabbath, "the Lord's day." Every day is his, as it is allotted to us of his goodness, and should be spent in obedience to his will; but this is the day which he has consecrated to services of which himself is more directly the object;—to the study of his character and will; to the exercises of his worship and the publishing of his name; to services in which peculiarly he is honoured, and his people rejoice in him and are sanctified in conformity to his holiness. "If thou shalt call the Sabbath a delight and the holy of the Lord honourable, and shalt honour him, not doing thine own ways, nor finding thine own pleasure, nor speaking thine own words," declares at once the design and end of the institution, and the manner in which it should be observed. In this manner, and for this end, accordingly, the day has actually been observed in all ages of the world, and under every form of dispensation, Patriarchal, Mosaical, and Christian; has been eminently their day of joy and blessedness; and the means of their preparation for eternal rest in heaven. Wantonly to profane it, is, therefore, open contempt of God; contempt of his authority and his worship; of his power and glory as our Creator, and of his condescension and grace as our Redeemer; of the riches of his mercy in inviting us to draw near to him; and of the example and persuasions of his people, calling us, with one consent and from age to age, to seek his face and glorify his name.

This is not a sin of *ignorance*. Those who commit it know what they do. There may indeed be a few men who seriously disbelieve in the moral obligation of the Sabbath, and others are blinded by custom in regard to the guilt of certain common violations of it, but it is undeniable that the great mass of those who are seen travelling on the high road Sabbath-days as on other days, for business or pleasure, or driving their boats and cars along our canals and railways, or loading and unloading vessels, fishing, hunting, and in other

forms innumerable, "doing their own ways and finding their own pleasure" on this holy day, know full well that they are sinning against God. They sin presumptuously. They deliberately and with determined purpose, pursue their business and pleasure, notwithstanding the known prohibition of their God. This is to incur guilt at a fearful rate. "The soul that doeth aught presumptuously," it is written in the law, "the same reproacheth the Lord; and that soul shall be cut off from among the people. Because he hath despised the word of the Lord, and hath broken his covenant, that soul shall be utterly cut off, his iniquity shall be upon him." And it is worthy of consideration, that the example introduced to illustrate this law, is that of a Sabbath-breaker; "And while the children of Israel were in the wilderness," (it is immediately subjoined to the law, as the form of expression intimates that the record respects a former transaction, and is here introduced, as I have said, for the sake of illustration,) "they found a man that gathered sticks upon the Sabbath-day." And it was of no consequence, as to the point in hand, whether he was gathering sticks or firing a town. The capital circumstance was, that he was sinning presumptuously; and perhaps he took occasion, from the trifling nature of the deed, in itself alone considered, to presume on impunity, in contempt of the authority of God. "And they that found him gathering sticks, brought him unto Moses and Aaron, and unto all the congregation. And they put him in ward, because it was not declared what should be done to him." The law respecting presumptuous sins was not at that time ordained. "And the Lord said unto Moses, the man shall surely be put to death: all the congregation shall stone him with stones without the camp." Now under the Gospel we have no such penalty. But we live under the administration of the same God. And can it be supposed that He who ordained this penalty under the law, will have no solemn reckoning with those who knowingly and with determined purpose, are guilty of the numberless and nameless forms of profaning the Sabbath which are common at this day? Was it worse for a man under the dark dispensation of Moses, to gather sticks on the Sabbath, than it is now, under the light of the Gospel, for men to make the resurrection-day of Christ, a day of business and pastime? The sin of Sabbath-breaking is a great sin.

Not only does this sin involve contempt of God, but it is also an outrage on the rights of men. In most Christian States, there are laws for the protection of society against it, which, at least in its more

gross and public forms, it tramples under foot. It thus directly opens the door to universal licentiousness; enfeebles the laws of society generally, and more especially laws framed for the restraint of impiety and immorality. Apart from this, it tends more directly to destroy our best blessing, and blot out our dearest hopes. The known propensities of men, and the experience of ages, prove that the Sabbath is necessary to the perpetuation of true religion in the world. Without the Sabbath, the public worship of God could not be maintained; and without public worship, domestic and private worship would not long, and by any considerable number, be continued. The business and scenes of the world, crowding on the senses day after day, with nothing to summon the mind strongly to the consideration of the things of God and eternity, could not fail to supplant all realizing faith and living religion in the minds of men. This is the effect in vast numbers among us now, notwithstanding the Sabbath, and the constant recurrence of the public exercises of religion. What then would remain to hinder the same effect, or to repair the evil, were it once to proceed so far as to procure a general desecration of the Sabbath, and shut up the doors of the sanctuary? The consequence, probably, would not be paganism; for a people once blessed with the Gospel would be too enlightened to adopt such absurdities; and certainly a people that should have cast off the mild yoke of the Gospel, would never submit to such heavy exactions; but it would be downright infidelity—blank atheism—a dereliction of all sense of accountableness—all fear of judgment—all sense of a future being. Whatever importance, then, is in Christianity; whatever sanctifying influence, moral restraint, or supporting hope; whatever comfort to the afflicted, or peace to the dying; whatever blessings pertaining to this life, or glory in the life to come; of such importance is the Sabbath with its ordinances, on which all these are dependent, and proportionable is the evil of profaning it. Whatever evil there would be in blotting Christianity from the world, stopping the succession of redeemed souls, consigning future generations to universal ignorance of the gospel or reigning unbelief, and turning the whole tide of human population down the broad way to eternal death;—that is the evil which Sabbath-breaking tends to produce; for were it universal, this would be the result.

There is another view of this subject, which, though I cannot present it in detail, I would here suggest. There are those who, while they think lightly of religion, profess highly to value our free institu-

tions. They boast of liberty, and of the sciences, the arts, the enterprise, the universal education of the people, and the general prosperity and happiness which they claim to be its fruits. And what is liberty? It is the unrestricted enjoyment of our rights, so far as this is consistent with the well-being of society. Those who are deprived of these, whether by a single despot or a lawless multitude, are enthralled. If I may not eat the fruit of my labor, or dwell quietly in my own domicile; if I may not speak my own thoughts, or follow the dictates of my own conscience, what matters it whether I am prevented by the arm of government and the terror of the inquisition, or by the fear of an assassin and the threats of a mob? What liberty, then, can there be among depraved men, without law to restrain their appetites and passions? or what efficacy can there be in law, without a corresponding moral sentiment in the community to sustain it? or what efficacious moral sentiment without religion? or what religion without the Sabbath? It is demonstrable that the Sabbath is no less indespensable to our privileges and hopes as a free people, than it is so all the blessings and immunities which pertain to us as heirs of eternity and accountable subjects of God.

Turn your eyes on those immense regions of the earth where the Sabbath is unknown, and what do you find the moral, social, and civil condition of men there? Shrouded with ignorance and besotted with sin, man there loses his rational character, prostrates himself before beasts and reptiles, stocks and stones; and is "filled with unrighteousness, covetousness, envy, murder, deceit, malignity; without understanding, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful;" a slave to an arbitrary despot; a slave to a superstitious priesthood; a slave to his own vile lusts. But see, over this miserable waste, here and there, verdant spots, fresh with the beauties of holiness, where intelligence, and social virtue, and domestic union, and civil order, and evangelical obedience, communion and hope, are beginning to appear. These have all been redeemed from the wide-spread ruin, by means of the Gospel and its institutions; and, among these institutions, by the Sabbath especially. No sooner did the missionaries of the cross plant themselves there, than they began the celebration of the resurrection-day of the Lord. When any of the heathen began to listen to their report, they taught them the nature and design of the day, and associated them with themselves in its solemnities; and by the divine blessing on the observance of it, the wonderful transformation has been accomplished. Hence, their schools, and colleges,

and sanctuaries, and seats of justice, and other blessings of civilized and Christian life.

See also those portions of the world where the Sabbath was once hallowed, but is now abandoned or given up to pastime. There, indeed, having once exposed the horrors of paganism, it has precluded the restoration of them in their naked forms. Still the desecration of the day has been followed by a degeneracy searcely less deplorable. The body of the people are either sunk in intellectual and moral degradation, as in Asia, or they are corrupted by an infidel rationalism, or a more absolute atheism, as in parts of continental Europe. The knowledge of God, the faith of the cross, the sense of accountableness, the expectation of eternal judgment, are, for the most part, excluded; and without these, men are either held together by the strong hand of despotism, or they are abandoned to whatever intrigue, rapine, or violence, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life, may prompt them to. So far as this is not the case, it is prevented chiefly by what remains of a religious observation of the Sabbath among them. Without the Sabbath, the security, the confidence, the harmony, the order, the intelligence, and the civil freedom, which are so important to the happiness of life, are not to be enjoyed in this fallen world; and God, in the mean time, is neither sought nor found; immortality is neither an object of hope nor of dread. None ask for mercy, nor obtain it. Together they tread the downward road, and generation after generation goes down to the chambers of death

Thanks be to God that with us, and a multitude beside, the case is different. On us, of his abundant mercy, the Sabbath shines with its heavenly light. Often as the week returns, it calls us away from the cares and bustle of life, with still small voice, to the house of God. There we are taught to seek and serve our glorious Creator and Redeemer. There on the mercy seat he is inclined to listen to our petitions, receive our praise, accept our repentance, and forgive our sins. There he dispenses those glorious truths which form such as receive them to those kind dispositions, those sober habits, those principles of integrity and faithfulness, and that sense of accountableness to God, which unite men in an orderly and happy society; and which, at the same time, bring them to that peace with God, that conformity to his holiness, and that hope of glory, which alone can comfort them under the evils of life, sustain them in the hour of death, and prepare them for a blessed immortality. What then are

those doing, whose conduct and example go to take from us and from the world these blessings? With what abundant reason might we remonstrate with such in the language of Nehemiah and say, "What evil thing is this that ye do, and profane the Sabbath day?"

2. *Civil laws to protect the Sabbath from open violation, are just and proper.*—Besides the moral law graven on stones, and given to the congregation of Israel, in common with others, as the universal law of Jehovah's kingdom, there was a national code appropriated to them as his peculiar people; and in this we find the law of the Sabbath incorporated and enforced by civil penalites. On this ground it was that Nehemiah went to the magistrates of Jerusalem and charged them with guilt in forbearing to exercise the authority which God had vested in them to restrain profanations of the day. Equally incumbent is it on every other community, which has authority over its own members, whether it be a family or an empire, to protect the Sabbath from desecration. The fourth commandment directly enjoins this upon the head of a family. Its terms are, "in it thou shalt not do any work, neither thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, nor thy man-servant, nor thy maid-servant, nor thy cattle, nor the stranger that is within thy gates." By parity of reason, the same obligation rests upon the heads of families collectively, who compose a state or nation, so far as the power of making and executing the laws is in their hands; and in governments where this power is not vested in them, the obligation rests on these to whom the power belongs. It is not optional with them whether or not they shall throw the shield of law around the day which God has sanctified; but so long as the fourth commandment shall remain, he will hold them accountable for this, in respect to all those, whether citizens or strangers, who are within their gates.

Nor is there any thing in this unjust, or aside from the proper scope of the laws of society. To enforce a spiritual observation of the Sabbath is not, indeed the province of civil authority. With duties appropriately religious, it has no direct concern. These it must leave to the higher authority of God, and the conscience of every individual. But to protect those who are disposed religiously to observe the Sabbath, in the peaceful enjoyment of the privilege, is no less just and proper, than it is to protect them in the enjoyment of any other right or privilege. No right can be more sacred—no privilege dearer, in their view, than this; because it takes hold directly of their highest—their everlasting interests: and nothing short

of absolute prohibition can be more incompatible with their enjoyment of it; nothing a greater outrage on their feelings and their peace, than an unrestrained desecration of the day. They, too, are the mass of the community. The great majority, at least in this nation, profess to be a Christian people. Though there are individuals in almost every part of it, who avow their disbelief of Christianity, and their disrespect for the Sabbath, they are few in the comparison. Ninety-nine hundredths probably would consider a general disregard of the Sabbath destructive to their bests interests. Such being the fact, to require that no laws for the protection of the Sabbath be made, or that, having been made, they be a dead letter; to require that the mass of our citizens yield to the few, and be governed by their wishes, is a position which, on any other subject of legislation, would not, for a moment, be tolerated. There is nothing unjust in those laws. They are no more of an infringment on any man's liberty than are hundreds of other laws in every well-regulated community in which the few are required so to conduct their personal concerns as not to interfere with the interests of the many.

Further: If there is any truth in the observations which I have before made, we owe it not only to the authority of God, and to the individuals who reverence the Sabbath, but to society itself, to see that no servile work be done on the Sabbath, and consequently no other public violations of it. There is no important interest of society, taken as a whole, which is not promoted by the Sabbath. Those who spurn at its requisitions, are yet sharers with others in its benefits;—in the good resulting from industry and sobriety; the intelligence and kind feelings; the civility and good morals; the institutions of learning and administration of justice; the security of persons and property; as these are promoted by a religious observation of the Sabbath. Indeed the very frame-work of society among ourselves depends very much on the Sabbath. Our government could not long be sustained without it. It depends, as all agree, on the virtue of the people. But that virtue has its foundation in the Christian religion; and this requires for its inculcation and efficacious influence on the mass of the people, their joint observation of the Sabbath. A despotic government may be sustained by the vigor of the arm that wields it; but a free government—a government founded in the will of the people—when once the people have cast off the government of God, is dissolved. A free government, where the mass of the people are Atheists or Infidels, the world never has, and never

will have, seen. In every view, then, laws for the protection of the Sabbath are just and right. They are according to the will of God. They belong to the province of civil society. They are necessary to its vital interests.

3. *For a due execution of these laws, men, clothed with the authority and the influence to do this, are answerable to God, and incur great guilt by neglecting it.* It is but too little considered, that rulers are accountable to God for their official as well as their private conduct. Receiving their appointment by the voice of the people, they are apt to consider themselves accountable to the people alone; satisfied to have subserved their pleasure, and received the reward of their approbation. But are they not also ministers of God; and as such, accountable to him for a faithful discharge of the duties of their office? Is it not by the appointment of God that, whether by the voice of the people or in any other way, one man has the power to coerce the will, and compel the subjection of his equals? and is it not by his Providence, as presiding over all human affairs, that one man receives this power rather than another? and having received it, for what can he be reasonably supposed to be accountable, if not for his conduct in so important and solemn a betrustment? Is the sentinel of an army, who neglects to give warning of an approaching enemy, justly considered answerable for the slain? Though he may not have desired the evil day, yet becoming a guilty cause, must he die, as though he were the immediate perpetrator? And shall not ministers of God, ordained by him in the constitution of society, for the punishment of evil, be answerable to him for the consequences of their unfaithfulness? On this ground it was, that Nehemiah charged on the nobles of Judah the profanation of the Sabbath, which they forebore to restrain; and on the same principles, the officers of government now, both those who are appointed to make presentment of such breaches of law as come to their knowledge, and those who are sworn duly to prosecute such as are presented, take upon themselves the guilt of all the Sabbath-breaking which they tolerate; and should the consequence, at a future day, be the prevalence of irreligion, the prostration of law, the undermining of our best institutions, and the ruin of unnumbered souls, they, with others, must bear their burden; and certainly it cannot fail to be one, which, if repentance do not prevent, will sink them in woes unfathomable.

I have said nothing of their *official oaths.* The fact of their being

clothed with office, binds them to discharge its duties. Irrespective of their oaths, they cannot neglect the duties prescribed without guilt. Nor can they avoid it by turning away their eyes from transgression, and saying, "Behold, we know it not." But how much greater must their guilt be, when to the sin of unfaithfulness is added the sin of perjury! The voice of wisdom cries, "I counsel thee to keep the king's commandment, and that in regard of the oath of God."

It is, I know, extensively felt and said, that laws for the protection of the Sabbath must be given up to the will of their enemies; that the times are gone by in which they might be executed; that public sentiment now would not allow it. If it be so, clear it is, that such laws ought not to exist. So long as they remain, I see not how any informing officer can answer it to his conscience to forbear presenting the violations of them which he sees; at least, until he have made full proof that, go where he may, his complaints would be unheard. It is indeed a hard lot with the ministers of justice, when public sentiment is really and firmly set against the execution of the laws; when society, having made the laws, appointed the men to execute them, and bound them, by their oaths, to all due fidelity, abandons them if they oppose the will of the lawless; when the wealthy and the powerful, unless they desist, join to reproach and persecute them; and the people collectively give them no protection or redress. In this case, the responsibility is transferred from the ruler to the people, and therefore I have said that men of influence, as well as men of authority, incur great guilt, when they connive at profanations of the Sabbath: and if there is a people under heaven to which the ancient warning may pertinently be addressed—"If ye will not hearken unto me to hallow the Sabbath day, then will I kindle a fire in the gates of Jerusalem, and it shall devour the palaces thereof, and it shall not be quenched," I know not where it shall be found, unless it be the people which has itself the legislative power, and selects, at his own will, the guardians of the laws.

But let not the friends of the Sabbath hastily throw off the sense of responsibility. Although in some places it were vain to attempt its protection by the civil arm, it may not be so in all; and in those where the attempt might have been vain in times past, we have no warrant to act on the presumption, without palpable evidence, that it would be so now. Public sentiment may have changed. Evils which had excited no considerable alarm, some time at last rouse

the feelings of the community against them; and sometimes there is a concurrence of favourable influences to strengthen the hands of the just. How extensive and glorious, for a number of years, have been the effusions of grace in our country! And shall these not be felt in the work of arresting the tide of irreligion that is sweeping over it? When the enemy cometh in like a flood, is it not the office of the spirit of the Lord to lift up a standard against him? In how many towns and villages there are hundreds of individuals—many of them heads of families, and all of them constituting the great majority of intelligence and influence—under the oath of the Christian profession to sustain, at all hazards, and by all means, the institutions of Christ; to stand by the friends of his cause; and to bear their burdens! There are many, besides, whose attachment to the Sabbath, and whose sense of the importance of preserving its sacredness in the community, are no less to be doubted. And shall a few lawless men, in resistance of such a body of influence, wrest the sword of justice from the hand of God's ministers? Surely the civil guardians of our sacred institutions, might be made to feel, that in a faithful discharge of their duty, they would have nothing to fear; and if, by our neglect of giving them assurance of this, our Sabbaths shall be given up to desecration, how shall we answer for it to those men whom yet we bring under obligation at the peril of their souls, faithfully to execute the laws? How shall we answer for it to our children and children's children, exposed to the seduction of lawless impiety? How shall we answer for it to God, when the sins of a degenerate people through successive generations, shall be traced to our supineness, and the time of vengeance shall have come?

My brethren, you see with every passing year the increasing boldness with which the Sabbath is profaned. You know how that, along all the great thoroughfares of our country, in most of our large cities, and many other parts of the land, the very appearance of sacred rest is almost gone, and tens of thousands of immortal beings there, coachmen, boatmen, tavernmen, and tenders, are as really strangers to the blessings of the Sabbath, as the heathens themselves. You cannot be ignorant that the tide of licentiousness that is sweeping over the country, is setting in upon its most favored portions, so that, from the one end of it to the other, the boldest despiser of the day of God scarcely fears the restraint of law, or the voice of rebuke. We are fast becoming an apostate people. The great interest is a worldly interest. The supreme deity is mammon. To this, the authority

of God, the sacredness of the Sabbath, piety, justice, mercy, must bow. The sighing of the captive, the groans of the exile, the petitions of tens of thousands that the Sabbath may no longer be profaned by governmental acts, are lighter than vanity, counterpoised against the *great* interests of this *great* nation. What will be the end of these things? Is there not a voice coming to us from the insulted Majesty of heaven, and demanding, by all our regard for his honour, and all our attachment to the best blessings conferred on any people, "Who will rise up for me against the evil doers? who will stand up for me against the workers of iniquity?"

In conclusion, may I not say more particularly to you, my Christion brethren, "Stand in the ways and see; ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls." After the example of those venerated ancestors, whom you regard as now sleeping in Jesus, be strict and conscientious observers of the Sabbath. Have all your worldly business done when the Sabbath begins, and rest till the Sabbath ends. As far as practicable, have your domestic cares disposed of beforehand, and your whole domestic economy arranged, to allow the most time possible to be employed by yourselves and all under your care, in spiritual engagements, Avoid unnecessary worldly conversation and secular reading on this holy day, and summon the energies of your souls to its appropriate services, public, domestic and private, in their delightful order and mutual subserviency. When abroad, keep the day, as far as circumstances allow, in the same manner as at home. Give no countenance to the desecration of it by your example, wherever you may be, and whatever may be the expense or the self-denial which your dissent may require. Only by a strict, consistent and uniform observance of it, can you expect, according to the divine promise, "to delight yourselves in the Lord." Dividing the day between the services of religion and a conformity to this world, you will enjoy neither, and never know where to draw the line of separation. Perpetually will you find yourselves wandering from duty, according to your own estimation of it; one step will insensibly lead you on to others still farther from spirituality; your conscience will be burdened; your confidence toward God destroyed; and your hearts unfitted for those impressions of truth, and those divine contemplations, feelings, purposes and enjoyments, for which the day is consecrated. Only by a strict and uniform observance of it, will your example show that you fear God; or tell in the consciences of men around

you; or qualify you with success to rally around the laws of society, in defence of this palladium of our liberties and institutions. I beseech you, brethren, in this particular, walk worthy of your vocation. Do this, and you may perhaps find it to have a bearing upon your personal enjoyment and salvation, of which you are not now fully aware; and an influence in forming your families, in blessing society around you, and in arresting the judgments of God from a sinful nation, yet more important.

Fathers and Mothers—As you desire your children to be virtuous and happy in this world, and blessed forever, "Remember," and teach them to "Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy." Exceedingly to be desired, for their sakes as well as your own, is that universal stillness and repose during Sabbath hours, which so sweetly invite to spiritual contemplations and employments, and which the laws of society alone can secure. But if this may not be, if the Sabbath is to be abandoned of the protection of law, and the restraints of custom and public sentiment are to lose their force; if men, respected as neighbours and citizens, are to be seen all around boldly profaning the day, when interest or pleasure calls, the more indispensable is it that you forewarn your children against the day of temptation. In these circumstances, if they are trained only to a lax and accommodating observance of the Sabbath, what can you expect but that they will gradually wear away what sense of its sacredness they have, and mingle with the worldly throng in relinquishing forever the exalted and immortal blessings which it was designed to convey. For their sakes, I beseech you, "Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy." Let your example be such that. when you have gone down to the grave, it may live in their recollection as a perpetual and persuasive admonition. Nor fail to employ these silent and sacred hours in directing their minds to those divine truths, on their knowledge and living sense of which their present and everlasting peace depends. I would, as far as possible, prevent their deeming the services of the day a yoke of bondage. I would prevent in their minds, every association of heaviness and painful restraint, with the day that God has blessed. I would endeavour so to engage them in employments rational, improving, and entertaining, as well as sacred, as to allure them away from every profanation of it; but that, by some means, they be withdrawn from secular employments and amusements, is expressly enjoined. If this cannot be accomplished by persuasion, it must be done by authority. It must be done in regard not only

to our sons and daughters, but also our men-servants and maid-servants, and even the stranger that is within our gates. The command is absolute, and every householder is made responsible for the order of his family according to it.

To the young let me say, look back on the history of this holy day. See our first parents waking into life to spend the first day of their existence as a Sabbath. See them, often as it returned, welcoming its sacred hours for acts of more exclusive communion with their Creator than their circumstances, even in paradisaical innocence, allowed. See Abraham, Moses, and David, see the Apostles, and Christ himself; see the multitude of their pious contemporaries in long succession, counting the Sabbath their delight, and the holy of the Lord honourable. "They went to the house of the Lord with the voice of joy and praise. They praised him for his mighty acts. They uttered abundantly the memory of his great goodness. They esteemed a day in his courts better than a thousand. They longed, yea, even fainted for the courts of the Lord. And the Lord God was their sun and shield. He gave them grace and glory." In this manner every generation of the worshippers of God on earth, have been prepared to unite with his worshippers in heaven. Thither are they gone; and you are coming forward on the stage of human action to succeed them. Will you not be followers of their form? Will you not aspire to a share in their blessedness when your course shall have been finished, and to a safe transmission to succeeding generations of the principles which you have inherited? Look at men of the other class. Who and what are they who have no conscience in regard to the Sabbath, and no reverence for the sanctuary? Is it not in this class that you find all those against whom it is necessary, when you come up the house of God, to lock your doors? and though all are not so abandoned, are they those who give you reasonable evidence that they fear God, or that, dying as they live, they will be heirs of salvation? Choose you on which side you will be found? In the great moral struggle that is going on, take your stand early, firmly, decidedly and forever. "Fear God, and keep his commandments, for God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good or evil."

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LIVING TO GOD IN SMALL THINGS.

"He that is faithful in that which is least, is faithful also in much; and he that is unjust in the least, is unjust also in much."—Luke xvi 10.

A readiness to do some great thing is not peculiar to Naaman the Syrian. There are many Christians who can never find a place large enough to do their duty. They must needs strain after great changes, and their works must utter themselves by a loud report. Any reform in society, short of a revolution, any improvement in character, less radical than that of conversion, is too faint a work, in their view, to be much valued. Nor is it merely ambition, but often it is truly Christian zeal, guarded by no sufficient views of the less imposing matters of life, which betrays men into such impressions. If there be any thing, in fact, wherein the views of God and the impressions of men are apt to be at a total variance, it is in respect to the solemnity and importance of ordinary duties. The hurtfulness of mistake here is of course very great. Trying always to do great things, to have extraordinary occasions every day, or to produce extraordinary changes, when small ones are quite as much needed, ends, of course, in defeat and dissipation. It produces a sort of religion in the gross, which is no religion in particular. My text leads me to speak—

OF THE IMPORTANCE OF LIVING TO GOD ON COMMON OCCASIONS AND IN SMALL THINGS.

"He that is faithful in that which is least," says the Saviour, "is faithful also in much; and he that is unjust in the least, is unjust also in much." This was a favorite sentiment with him. In his sermon on the mount it was thus expressed—Whosoever, therefore, shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven; but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven. And when he rebuked the Pharisees, in their tything of mint, anise, and cummin, he was careful to speak very guardedly—These things ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone. It will instruct us in prosecuting this subject—

1. To notice how little we know concerning the relative importance of events and duties. We use the terms *great* and *small* in speaking of actions, occasions, plans, and duties, only in reference to their mere outward look and first impression. Some of the most latent agents and mean-looking substances in nature, are yet the most operative; but yet, when we speak of natural objects, we call them great or small, not according to their operativeness, but according to size, count, report, or show. So it comes to pass when we are classing actions, duties, or occasions, that we call a certain class great and another small, when really the latter are many fold more important and influential than the former. We may suppose, for illustration, two transactions in business, as different in their nominal amount as a million of dollars and a single dollar. The former we call a large transaction, the latter a small one. But God might reverse these terms. He would have no such thought as the counting of dollars. He would look, first of all, at the principle involved in the two cases. And here he would discover, not unlikely that the nominally small one, owing to the nature of the transaction, or to the humble condition of the parties, or to their peculiar temper and disposition, took a deeper hold of their being, and did more to settle or unsettle great and everlasting principle, than the other. Next, perhaps, he would look at the consequences of the too transactions, as developed in the great future; and here he would perhaps discover that the one which seems to us the smaller, is the hinge of vastly greater consequences than the other. If the dollars had been sands of dust, they would not have had less weight in the divine judgment.

We are generally ignorant of the real moment of events which we think we understand. Almost every person can

recollect one or more instances, where the whole after-current of his life was turned by a single word, or some incident, so trival as scarcely to fix his notice at the time. On the other hand, many great crises of danger—many high and stirring occasions, in which, at the time, his total being was absorbed, have passed by, leaving no trace of effect on his permanent interest, and are well nigh vanished from his memory. The conversation of the stage coach is often preparing results, which the solemn assembly and the most imposing and eloquent rites will fail to produce. What countryman, knowing the dairyman's daughter, could have suspected that she was living to a mightier purpose and result, than almost any person in the church of God, however eminent? The outwrad of occasions and duties are,in fact,almost no index of their importance; and our judgments concerning what is great and small, are without any certain validity. These terms, as we use them, are, in fact, only words of outward description, not words of definite measurement.

It is to be observed that even as the world judges, small things constitute almost the whole of life. The great days of the year, for example, are few, and when they come, they seldom bring any thing great to us. And the matter of all common days is made up of little things, or ordinary and stale transactions. Scarcely once in a year does any thing really remarkable befall us. If I were to begin and give an inventory of the things you do in any single day, your muscular motions, each of which is accomplished by a separate act of will, the objects you see, the words you utter, the contrivances you frame, your thoughts, passions, gratifications, and trials, many of you would not be able to hear it recited with sobriety. But three hundred and sixty-five such days make up a year, and a year is a twentieth, fiftieth, or seventieth part of your life. And thus, with the exception of some few striking passages, or great and critical occasions, perhaps not more than five or six in all, your life is made up of common, and as men are wont to judge, unimportant things. But yet, at the end, you have done up an amazing work, and fixed an amazing result. You stand at the bar of God, and look back on a life made up of small things—but yet a life, O how momentous, for good or evil.

3. It very much exalts, as well as sanctions, the view I am advancing, that God is so observant of small things. He upholds the sparrow's wing, clothes the lily with his own beautifying hand, and numbers the hairs of his children. He holds the balancings of the clouds.* He maketh small the drops of rain. It astonishes all thought to observe the minuteness of God's government, and of the natural and common

processes which he carries on from day to day. His dominions are spread out, system beyond system, system above system, filling all height and latitude, but he is never lost in the vast or magnificent. He descends to an infinite detail, and builds a little universe in the smallest things. He carries on a process of growth in every tree, and flower, and living thing; accomplishes in each an internal organization and works the functions of an internal laboratory, too delicate all for eye or instrument to trace. He articulates the members and directs the instincts of every living mote that shines in the sunbeam. As when we ascend towards the distant and the vast, so when we descend towards the minute, we see his attention acuminated and his skill concentrated on his object; and the last discernable particle dies out of our sight with the same divine glory on it as on the last orb that glimmers in the skirt of the universe. God is as careful to finish the mote as the planet, both because it consists only with his perfection to finish everything, and because the perfection of his greatest structures is the result of perfection in their smallest parts or particles. On this patience of detail rests all the glory and order of the created universe, spiritual and material. God could thunder the year round; he could shake the ends of the world with perpetual earthquakes; he could blaze on the air, and brush the affrighted mountains, each day, with his comets. But if he could not feed the grass with his dew, and breathe into the little lungs of his insect family; if he could not expend his care on small things, and descend to an interest in their perfection, his works would be only crude and disjointed machines, compounded of mistake and malformations, without beauty and order, and fitted to no perfect end.

The works of Christ are, if possible, a still brighter illustration of the same truth. Notwithstanding the vast stretch and compass of the work of redemption, it is a work of the most humble detail in its style of execution. The Saviour could have preached a sermon on the Mount every morning. Each night he could have stilled the sea before his astonished disciples, and shown the conscious waves lulling into peace under his feet. He could have transfigured himself before Pilate and the astonished multitudes of the temple. He could have made visible acensions in the noon of every day, and revealed his form standing in the sun, like the angel of the apocalypse. But this was not his mind. The incidents of which his work is principally made up are, humanly speaking, very humble and unpretending. The most faithful pastor in the world was never able, in any degree, to approach the Saviour, in the lowliness of his manner and his

attention to humble things. His teachings were in retired places, and his illustrations drawn from ordinary affairs. If the finger of faith touched him in the crowd, he knew the touch, and distinguished also the faith. He reproved the ambitious housewifery of an humble woman. After he had healed a poor being, blind from his birth—a work transcending all but divine power—he returned and sought him out, as the most humble Sabbath-school teacher might have done; and when he had found him, cast out and persecuted by men, he taught him privately the highest secrets of his Messiahship. When the world around hung darkened in sympathy with his cross, and the earth was shaking with inward amazement, he himself was remembering his mother, and discharging the filial cares of a good son. And when he burst the bars of death, his first and final conqueror, he folded the linen clothes and the napkin, and laid them in order apart, showing that, in the greatest things, he had a set purpose also concerning the smallest. And thus, when perfectly scanned, the work of Christ's redemption, like the created universe, is seen to be a vast orb of glory, wrought up out of finished particles. Now a life of great and prodigious exploits would have been comparatively an easy thing for him, but to cover himself with beauty and glory in small things, to fill and adorn every little human occasion, so as to make it divine—this was a work of skill, which no mind or hand was equal to but that which shaped the atoms of the world. Such every where is God. He no where overlooks or despises small things.

4. It is a fact of history and of observation that all efficient men, while they have been men of comprehension, have also been men of detail. I wish it were possible to produce as high an example of this two-fold character among the servants of God and benevolence in these times, as we have in that fiery prodigy of war and conquest, who, in the beginning of the present century, desolated Europe. Napoleon was the most effective man in modern times—some will say, of all times. The secret of his character was, that while his plans was more vast, more various, and, of course, more difficult than those of other men, he had the talent, at the same time, to fill them up with perfect promptness and precision, in every particular of execution. His vast and daring plans would have been visionary in any other man, but with him every vision flew out of his brain like a chariot of iron; because it was filled up, in all the particulars of execution, to be a solid and compact framework in every part. His armies were together only one great engine of desolation, of which he was the head or brain. Numbers, spaces, times, were

all distinct in his eye. The wheeling of every legion, however remote, was mentally present to him. The tramp of every foot sounded in his ear. The numbers were always supplied, the spaces passed over, the times met, and so the work was done. The nearest moral approximation I know of was Paul the apostle. Paul had great principles, great plans, and a great enthusiasm. He had the art, at the same time, to bring his great principles into a powerful application to his own conduct, and to all the common affairs of all the disciples in his churches. He detected every want, understood every character, set his guards against those whom he distrusted, kept all his work turning in a motion of discipline, prompted to every duty. You will find his epistle distinguished by great principles; and, at the same time, by a various and circumstantial attention to all the common affairs of life; and in that you have the secret of his efficiency. There must be detail in every great work. It is an element of effectiveness which no reach of plan, no enthusiasm of purpose, can dispensed with. Thus, if a man conceives the idea of becoming eminent in learning, but cannot toil through the million of little drudgeries necessary to carry him on, his learning will be soon told. Or if a man undertakes to become rich, but despises the small and gradual advances by which wealth is ordinarily accumulated, his expectations will, of course, be the sum of his riches. Accurate and careful detail, the minding of common occasions and small things, combined with general scope and vigor, is the secret of all the efficiency and success in the world. God has so ordered things that great and sudden leaps are seldom observable. Every advance in the general must be made by advances in particular. The trees and the corn do not leap up suddenly into maturity, but they climb upward, by little and little, and after the minutest possible increment. The orbs of heaven, too, accomplish their circles not by one or two extraordinary starts or springs, but by travelling on through paces and roods of the sky. It is thus, and only thus, that any disciple will become efficient in the service of his Master. He cnnnot do up his works of usefulness by the prodigious stir and commotion of a few extraordinary occasions. Laying down great plans, he must accomplish them by great industry, by minute attentions, by saving small advances, by working out his way as God shall assist him.

5. It is to be observed that there is more of real piety in adorning one small than one great occasion. This may seem paradoxical, but what I intend will be seen by one or two illustrations. I have spoken of the minuteness of God's works. When I regard the eternal God, as engaged in polishing an

atom, or elaborating the functions of a mote invisible to the eye, what evidence do I there receive of his desire to perfect his works! No gross and mighty world, however plausibly shaped, would yield a hundredth part the intensity of evidence. An illustration from human things will present a closer parallel. It is perfectly well understood, or if not, it should be that almost any husband would leap into the sea, or rush into the burning edifice to rescue a perishing wife. But to anticipate the convenience or happiness of a wife in some small matter, the neglect of which would be unobserved, is a more eloquent proof of tenderness. This shows a mindful fondness, which wants occasions in which to express itself. And the smaller the occasion seized upon, the more intensely affectionate is the attention paid. Piety towards God may be well tested or measured in the same way. Peter found no difficulty in drawing his sword and fighting for his Master, even at the hazard of his life, though but an hour or less afterward he forsook him and denied him. His valor on that great and exciting occasion was no proof of his piety. But when the gentle Mary came, with her box of ointment, and poured it on the Saviour's head—an act which satisfied no want, met no exigency, and was of no use, except as a gratuitous and steady proof of her attachment to Jesus—he marks it as an eminent example of piety, saying—"Verily I say unto you, wheresoever this gospel shall be preached in the world, there also shall this, that this woman hath done, be told for a memorial of her."

My breathren, this piety which is faithful in that which is least, is really a more difficult piety than that which triumphs and glares on high occasions. Our judgments are apt to be dazzled by a vain admiration of the more public attemps and the more imposing manifestations of occasional zeal. It requires less piety, I verily believe, to be a martyr for Christ, than it does to love a powerless enemy; or to maintain a gentle spirit in the midst of provocations; or to look upon the success of a rival without envy; or even to maintain a perfect and guileless integrity in the common transactions of life. Precisely, this, in fact, is the lesson which history teaches. How many, alas! of those who have died in the manner of martyrdom, manifestly sought that distinction, and brought it on themselves by instigation of a mere fanatical ambition! Such facts seemed designed to show us that the common spheres of life and business, the small matters of the street, the shop, the hearth, and the table, are more genial to true piety than any artificial and extraordinary scenes of a more imposing description. Excitement, ambition, a thousand questionable causes, may ele-

vate us occasionally to great attempts, but they will never lead us into the more humble duties of constancy and godly industry, or teach us to adorn the unpretending spheres of life with a heavenly spirit. We love to do great things; our natural pride would be greatly pleased if God had made the sky taller, the world larger, and give us a more royal style of life and duty. But he understands us well. His purpose is to heal our infirmity; and with this very intent, I am persuaded, he has ordained these humble spheres of action, so that no ostentation, no great and striking explosions of godliness shall tempt our heart. And in the same way his word declares that, bestowing all one's goods to feed the poor, or giving his body to be burned, and of consequence, that great speeches and donations, that a mighty zeal for reform, that a prodigious jealousy for sound doctrine, without something better—without charity, profiteth nothing. And the picture of charity is humble enough. It suffereth long and is kind, envieth not, vaunteth not itself; is not puffed up, doth not behave itself unseemly; seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil, beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things.

6. The importance of living to God in ordinary and small things, is seen in the fact that character, which is the end of religion, is in its very nature a growth. Conversion is a great change; old things are passed away; behold all things are become new. This, however, is the language of a hope or confidence, somewhat prophetic, exulting at the beginning in the realization of future victory. The young disciple, certainly, is far enough from a consciousness of complete deliverance from sin. In that respect, his work is but just begun. He is now in the blade; we shall see him next in the ear; and after that, he will ripen to the full corn in the ear. His character, as a man and a Christian, is to accomplish its stature by growing. And all the offices of life, domestic, social, civil, useful, are contrived of God to be the soil, as Christ is the sun, of such a growth. All the cares, wants, labors, dangers, accidents, intercourses of life, are adjusted for the very purpose of exercising and ripening character. They are precisely adapted for this end, by God's all-perfect wisdom. This, in fact, is the grand philosophy of the structure of all things. And, accordingly, there never has been a great and beautiful character which has not become so by filling well the ordinary and smaller offices appointed of God.

The wonderful fortunes of Joseph seem, at first, to have fallen suddenly upon him, and altogether by a miracle. But a closer attention to his history will show you that he rose only by a gradual progress, and by the natural power of his

virtues. The astonishing art he had of winning the confidence of others, had, after all, no magic in it save the magic of goodness; and God assisted him, only as he assists other good men. The growth of his fortunes was the shadow only of his growth in character. By his assiduity he made every thing prosper; and by his good faith he won the confidence, first of Potiphar, then of the keeper of the prison, then of Pharaoh himself. And so he grew up gently and silently till the helm of the Egyptian kingdom was found in his hands.

David the king of Israel, was only David the young shepherd grown up to a fuller stature of intelligence, goodness, and personal command. He tried his hand first with the lambs and the sheep, then with the lion and the bear, and afterwards with Goliath. Had he not been a good shepherd he would not have been a good champion; had he not been a good champion, he would not have been king of Israel.

Peter, too, after he had flourished so vauntingly with his sword, entered on a growing and faithful life. From an ignorant fisherman, he became a skilful writer, a finished Christian, and a teacher of faithful living, in the common offices of life. He occupied his great apostleship in exhorting subjects to obey the ordinances of governors for the Lord's sake; servants to be subject to their masters; wives to study such a carriage as would win their unbelieving husbands; and husbands to win honor to the wife, as being heirs together of the grace of life. But in a manner to comprehend everything good, he said: Giving all diligence (this is the true notion of Christion excellence)—giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue, to virtue knowledge, to knowledge temperance, to temperance patience, to patience godliness, to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness charity. The impression is unavoidable, that he now regarded religion, not as a sword fight, but as a growth of holy character, kept up by all diligence in the walks of life.

Every good example in the word of God, is an illustration of the same truth. To finish a character on a sudden, or by any but ordinary duties, carefully and piously done, by a mere religion of Sundays and birth-days, and revivals and contributions, and orthodoxies, and public reforms, is no where undertaken. They watered the plant in secret, trained it up at family altars, strengthened it in the exposures of business, till it became a beautiful and heavenly growth, and ready, with all its blooming fruit, to adorn the Paradise of God.

It ought also to be noticed, under this head, that all the

mischiefs which befall Christian character and destroy its growth, are such as lie in the ordinary humble duties of life. Christians do not fall back into declension or disgraceful apostacy, on a sudden, or by the overcoming power of great and strange temptations. They are stolen away rather by little and little, and almost insensibly to themselves. They commonly fall into some lightness of carriage, some irritation of temper in their famiiy or business, some neglect of dnty to children, apprentices, or friends, some artfulness, some slight of integrity in business. These are the beginnings of evil. At length they grow a little more remiss. They begin to slight their secret duties. The world and its fashions become more powerful, and they yield a little farther; till at length they are utterly fallen from the spirit and life of Christians. And thus, you perceive that all the dangers which beset our piety, lie in the humble and ordinary matters of life. Here then is the place where religion must make her conquests. Here she must build her barriers and take her stand. And if it be a matter of consequence that the people of God should live constant and godly lives; that they should grow in the strength of their principles, and the beauty of their example; that the church should clear herself of all reproach, and stand invested with honor in the sight of all mankind,—if this be important, so important is it that we live well in small things, and adorn the common incidents of life with a heavenly temper and practice. Religion must forever be unstable, the people of Christ must fall into declension and disgrace, if it be not understood that here is the true field of the Christian life.

These illustrations of the importance of living to God in ordinary and common things might be carried to almost any extent; but I will arrest the subject here, and proceed to suggest some applications which may be useful.

1. Private Christians are here instructed in the true method of Christian progress and usefulness. It is a first truth with you all, I doubt not, brethren, that divine aid and intercourse are your only strength and reliance. You know, too well, the infirmity of your best purposes and endeavors, to hope for any thing but defeat, without the spirit of God dwelling in you and superintending your warfare. I show you here in what manner you may secure this divine indwelling permanently. It is not by attempts above your capacity, or by the invention of great and extraordinary occasions; but it is by living unto God daily. It is by industry, watchfulness, and a disposition to cherish all good tempers and graces. If you feel the necessity of making spiritual attainments, of growing in holiness; if you think as little of mere

starts and explosions in religious zeal as they deserve, and as much of growths, habits, and purified affections as God does, you will have a delightful work to prosecute in the midst of all your ordinary cares and employments, and you will have the inward witness of divine communion ever vouchsafed you. The sins, by which God's spirit is ordinarily grieved, are the sins of small things—laxities in keeping the temper, slight neglects of duty, lightness, sharpness of dealing. If it is your habit to walk with God in the humblest occupations of your days, it is very nearly certain that you will be filled with the Spirit always.

If it be a question with you, how to overcome bad and pernicious habits, the mode is here before you. The reason why those who are converted to Christ, often make so poor a work of rectifying their old habits, is that they lay down their work in the very places where it needs to be prosecuted most carefully, i. e. in their common employments. They do not live to God in that which is least. They reserve their piety for those exercises, public and private, which are immediately religious, and so a wide door is left open in all the common duties of life for their old habits to break in and take them captive. As if it were enough, in shutting out a flood, to dike the higher points of the ground and leave the lower!

If the question be, in what manner you may grow in knowlebge and intellectual strength, the answer is readily given. You can do it by no means save that of pertinacious, untiring application. No one becomes a Christian who cannot by the cultivation of thought, and by acquiring a well-discriminated knowledge of the scriptures, make himself a gift of four fold, and perhaps even a hundred fold value to the church. This he can do by industry, by improving small opportunities, and, not least, by endeavoring to realize the principles and the beauty of Christ in all his daily conduct. In this point of view, religion is cultivation itself, and that of the noblest kind. And never does it truly justify its nature, except when it is seen elevating the mind, the manners, the whole moral dignity of the subject.

Why is it that a certain class of men, who never thrust themselves on public observation, by any very signal acts, do yet attain to a very commanding influence, and leave a deep and lasting impression on the world? They are the men who thrive by constancy and by means of small advances, just as others do who thrive in wealth. They live to God in the common doings of their daily life, as well as in the more extraordinary occasions, in which they mingle. In this way, they show themselves to be actuated by good principle, not

from respect to the occasions where it may be manifested, but from respect to principle itself. And their carefulness to honor God in humble things, is stronger proof to men of their uprightness, than the most distinguished acts or sacrifices. Such persons operate principally by the weight of confidence and moral respect they acquire, which is the most legitimate and powerful action in the world. At first, it is not felt, because it is noiseless, and it is not thoroughly appreciated. It is action without pretence, without attack, and therefore, perhaps, without notice for a time. But by degrees the personal motives begin to be understood, and the beauty and moral dignity of the life are felt. No proclamation of an aim or purpose has, in the meantime, gone before the disciple to awaken suspicion or start opposition. The simple power of his goodness and uprightness flows out as an emanation on all around him. He shines like the sun, not because he purposes to shine, but bocause he is full of light. The bad man is rebuked, the good man strengthened by his example; every thing evil and ungraceful is ashamed before him, every thing right and lovely is made strongar and lovelier. And now, if he has the talent to undertake some great enterprise of reform or of benevolence, in the name of his Master, he has something already prepared in the good opinion of mankind, to soften or neutralize the pretence of such attempts, and give him favor in them. Or, if a Christian of this stamp has not the talents or standing necessary to lead in the more active forms of enterprise, he will yet accomplish a high and noble purpose in his life. The silent savor of his name may, perhaps, do more good after he is laid in his grave, than abler men do by the most active efforts. I often hear mentioned, by the Christians of our city, the name of a certain godly man, who has been dead many years; and he is always spoken of with so much respectfulness and affection, that I, a stranger of another generation, feel his power, and the sound of his name refreshes me. That man was one who lived to God in small things. I know this, not by any description which has thus set forth his character, but from the very respect and homage with which he is named. Virtually, he still lives among us, and the face of his goodness shines upon all our Christian labors. And is it not a delightful aspect of the Christian faith, that it opens so sure a prospect of doing good, on all who are in humble condition, or whose talents are too feeble to act in the more public spheres of enterprise and duty? Such are called to act by their simple goodness more than others are; and who has not felt the suspicion that such, when faithful, do actually discharge a calling the more exalted because of its un-

mixed nature? If there were none of these unpretending but beautiful examples, blooming in depression, sweetening affliction by their Christian patience, adorning poverty by their high integrity, and dying in the Christian heroism of faith,—if, I say, there were no such examples making their latent impressions, in the heart of the public mind, of the dignity and truth of the gospel, who shall prove that our great men, who are supposed to accomplish so much by their eloquence, their notable sacrifices and far-reaching plans, would not utterly fail in them? However this may be, we have reason enough, all of us, for living to God in every sphere of life. Blessed are they that keep judgment, and he that doeth righteousness AT ALL TIMES.

2. Our subject enables us to offer some useful suggestions, concerning the manner in which churches may be made to prosper.

First of all, brethren, you will have a care to maintain your purity and your honor, by the exercise of a sound discipline. And here you will be faithful in that which is least. You will not wait until a crisis comes, or a flagrant case arises, where the hand of extermination is needed. That is often a very cruel discipline, rather than one of brotherly love. Nothing, of course, should be done in a meddlesome spirit; for this would be more mischievous than neglect. But small things will yet be watched, the first gentle declinings noted and faithfully but kindly reproved, Your church should be like a family, not waiting till the ruin of a member is complete and irremidiable, but acting praventively. This would be a healthy discipline, and it is the only sort, I am persuaded, on which God will ever smile.

The same spirit of watchfulness and attention is necessary to all the solid interests of your church. It is not enough that you attempt to bless it occasionally by some act of generosity or some fit of exertion. Your brethren, suffering from injustice or evil report, must have your faithful sympathy; such as are struggling with adversity must have your aid; when it is possible, the more humble and private exercises of your church must be attended. It is your solemn duty also to cherish the good name, and encourage the good endeavors of your pastor; to abstain especially from light and flippant criticisms, and excuse the foibles which he has in common with all mankind; each of these points needs to be insisted on in a whole discourse. How many, alas! are they in our churches who injure them more in slight defects or breaches of duty, than they can possibly advance them in their highest efforts of zeal.

The impression cannot be too deeply fixed, that a church

must grow chiefly by its industry and the personal growth of its members. Some churches seem to feel that, if any thing is to be done, some great operation must be started. They cannot even repent without concert and a general ado. Have you not the preaching of God's word, brethren, at the mouth of his chosen servant? Have you not also families, friendships, interchanges of business, meetings for prayer, brotherly vows, opportunities of private and public charity? Do not despise these stale occasions—God has not planned the world badly. Christ did not want higher occasion than the Father gave him. The grand maxim of his mission was, that the humblest spheres give the greatest weight and dignity to principles—He was the good carpenter, saving the world! Rightly viewed, my brethren, there are no small occasions in this world, as in our haste we too often think. Great principles, principles sacred even to God, are at stake in every moment of life. What we want, therefore, is not invention, but industry; not the production of new and extraordinary occasions, but the realizing of our principles by adorning the doctrine of God our Savior in all things.

One of the best securities for the growth and prosperity of a church, is to be sought in a faithful exhibition of religion in families. Here is a law of increase, which God has incorporated in his church, and by which he designs to give her strength and encouragement. But why is it—I ask the question with grief and pain—why is it that so many children, so many apprentices and servants are seen to grow up, or to live many years in Christian families, without any regard, or even respect for religion? It is because their parents, guardians, or masters have that sort of piety, which can flourish only like Peter's sword, on great occasions. Then, perhaps, they are exceedingly full of piety, and put forth many awkward efforts to do good in their families; enough, it may be, to give them a permanent disgust for religious things. But when the great occasion is past, their work is done up. A spirit of worldliness now rolls in again, a want of conscience begins to appear, a light and carnal air of conversation to show itself. The preaching of the gospel is very critically, and somewhat wittily canvassed on the Sabbath. The day itself, in the mean time, fares scarcely better than the preacher. It is shortened by degrees at both ends, and again, by a newspaper or some trifling conversation, in the middle. There is no instructive remark at the family prayers, and perhaps no family instruction anywhere. There is no effort to point the rising family towards a better world, and apparently no living for such a world. Bad tempers are manifested in government and in business. Arts are prac

tised below dignity and wide of integrity. How is it possible that the children and youth of a family should not learn to despise such a religion? How different would be the result, if there were a simple unostentatious piety kept up with constancy, and the fear of God were seen to be a controlling principle, in all the daily conduct and plans of life! I have heard of many striking cases of conversion, which were produced, under God, by simply seeing the godly life of a Christian in his family, without a word of direct address and in a time of general inattention to religious things. In such a family every child and inmate will certainly respect religion. And the church, in fact, may count on receiving a constant and certain flow of increase from the bosom of such families.

I will not pursue this head farter. But feel assured of this, brethren, that an every-day religion, one that loves the duties of our common walk, one that makes an honest man, one that accomplishes an intellectual and moral growth in the subject, one that works in all weather, and improves all opportunities, will best, and most healthily promote the growth of a church, and the power of the gospel. God will never fail to put honor on such a style of piety.

Finally, some useful hints are suggested to the ministers of Christ, here present, in regard to the conduct and scope of our office.

It is not a full discharge of this glorious office, that much zeal be expended in fostering revivals of religion; not enough that the matter of conversion, as it is technically called, be much and successfully labored for. Nor if to revivals and conversions, be added the promotion of religious and beneficent societies, is that enough. The minister of God falls below his office, and narrows down the broad field of his profession, if he does not feel that his duty is to superintent the total character of his people. The declaration so often heard, that the great object of the gospel is the conversion of men, is certainly objectionable. It leads to a wrong impression, and a mistaken practice. What is conversion, but simply the beginning of a certain total work; and what work is this, but to present the sinful and lost race of man faultless before God? Whom we preach, says an Apostle, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom, that we may present the man perfect in Christ Jesus. This is the high purport of the ministerial office. It goes not after any mere class of occasions, however glorious and delightful to enjoy; it is not satisfied with any mere beginnings of good. But it takes up the grand total work of regenerating sinful character. Its aim and endeavor is to enlighten and strengthen the mind, by filling it with the

knowledge of God; to rectify bad habits, to chasten evil tempers, to uproot false principles and establish true ones, to make the subjects of the gospel better men in their families, their business, and in every sphere of life; to exalt every thing that is low in them; to ennoble them in every thing, to make them happier, more respected, the friends of truth, the benefactors of man, the servants of God,—in the words of inspiration, it is to present unto the Savior a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing. What other class of God's servants have as high an end before them? To take up sinful man, in all his degraded views, bad principles, and generally corrupt lusts, to teach him, to persuade him, to subdue him, to act uponh im in all his daily relations, and work him at length into the complete image of God—this surely is an office fit to inspire un angel!

What qualifications, too, does it demand! How much of good character, first of all in us! Then how nice a discernment of what is comely and good, in all the various matters of common life; how much of patience and holy pertinacity! how much industry, versatility and skill, in applying the great principles of religion to all the particular defects and errors of our people!

But God prescribes our office; and it were wrong not to believe that if we undertake God's real work, he will furnish us to it, and give us pleasure in it. He will transfuse into us some portion of his own versatility; he will attract us into a nicer observation of his wisdom in our humble duties and concerns. We shall more admire the healthiness of that which grows us in God's natural spring-times, and ripens in the air of his common days. The ordinary will thus grow dignified and sacred in our sight; and, without discarding all invention in respect to means and opportunities, we shall yet especially love to go after our people, where God daily leads them, and teach them to live unto God.

It was the taste of our blessed Master, my brethren, to make the ordinary, glow with mercy and goodness. Him we are to follow. We are to work after no set fashion of high endeavor, but to walk with Him, performing as it were, a ministry on foot, that we may stop at the humblest matters and dispense our doctrine. To keep the least commandments, and to teach men so, is to constitute the very grandeur of our mission, and the brightness of our crown. The same shall be called GREAT in the kingdom of heaven.

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SERMON CCLXV.

BY REV. JOHN TODD,

Philadelphia.

THE GUILT AND DANGER OF SECRET SINS.

Psalms xix. 12.—*Cleanse thou me from secret faults.*

Most men have intimate friends, or rather intimate *companions;* for we may not call those friends who have never been *tried*—and who would forsake you at the hour of trouble. Now, how would you feel towards the preacher, who should rise up and tell you that he was going to talk about your most intimate friends—was going to expose their characters, and show you that by associating with such companions, you are ruining yourself? Would you like to have these companions named and described, when you were conscious that they are vile and unworthy of you?

You *all* have such companions; and it is about these that I am going to speak at this time. They have long been associated with you—and the intimacy has become close.

When the Psalmist prays to be cleansed from "secret faults," I understand him to ask to be delivered from the dominion of all secret sins.

Some men have *one* particular sin which easily besets and conquers them: some have *another:* but when the hearts of all come at last to be revealed, I suppose it will be seen that every one had some particular sin into which he easily fell:—a sin which was seen only by the omniscient eye—known only to the great Searcher of hearts.

These secret sins, too, are peculiarly dangerous. They probably harden more hearts, sear more consciences, and ruin more souls, than do open, daylight sins. Shall I tell you *why* they do? Why are secret sins so dangerous?

1. Change of place and circumstances does not aid you to break away from them.

You know that if you have fallen into *open* sins, a change of place may aid you to break from them. Men sometimes leave their home—go abroad, mingle in other scenes, in other occupations, with other companions, for the very purpose of forming new habits, and breaking away from old sins. And they are successful too. A man who is tempted to be *intemperate*, may, by going to a spot where others do not drink, and where liquors are not to be had, become a temperate man. Another who is in the habit of using profane language, may, by going among society where this vice is discountenanced, break himself away from the habit. So you may by going to a new place, easily stop violating the Sabbath;—for you can break away from tempting companions by going to another place. Young men frequently are benefitted by going to another place of residence. They can leave all their old habits behind them; they can easily begin anew. Not so with secret sins. These you carry with you: they live in any soil, they flourish under any clime. They are not destroyed by going away from home, —by change of residence—by forming new acquaintances—they cling to the soul. They abide with you wherever you go. Many a one has been exceedingly disappointed in this respect. He thought by change of place, he was to change his character. But no—the spots abide with the leopard, the darkness of the Ethiop's skin will not be washed out.

You may mingle in new scenes—form new acquaintances—enter new business, follow new amusements—but if you are under the habit and power of secret sins, you meet them alone, just as you always have done. You have no new weapons of defence—no new means of conquering them, and they come like an armed man, and conquer you, as they always have done.

The sinner has taken his staff and gone away on the hard pilgrimage—but his secret sins find him even on the mount of Calvary, and conquer him still. He flees to the mountains and shuts himself up in the walls of the monastery, and hopes that the thick walls will shut out sin. Alas! he finds that they will scale the highest walls—find him in the remotest cell, and there slay him still. He calls for the scourge and the lash, and by self-torture hopes to drive away these secret sins! Alas! they nestle deep within, and no scourgings will reach them. The sinner may toss on his pillow, unable to sleep, and they are not wearied; he may fast and they are not starved out. He may cry, "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this sin and death?" and the groanings do not bring deliverance. The leprosy of the soul still remains, unabated, undestroyed.

2. Secret sins produce a continual warfare between the conscience and the desires of the heart.

Did you never see men becoming more and more irritable in their temper—more morose, and apparently dissatisfied with every thing around them? The reason, in very many cases is, (I do not say in all,) that they are dissatisfied with themselves. They are war with themselves. They live in secret sin, and the conscience stings and clamors, and having this painful, constant dissatisfaction with themselves, every thing without seems to go wrong. Hence they are irritable—hence they become soured and morose.

Many a face which now seldom smiles, would look very differently were the soul delivered from the dominion of secret sin, so that the conscience might be at rest. Are there none here who can understand what I am saying?

Did you never see men who seemed to be laboring under a premature old age, without any visible cause? The hair becomes gray, the eye sunken, the limbs feeble, and the house of clay falling into decay in very manhood? The reason is, in very many cases, that there is such a painful, constant warfare between the conscience and the inclinations, that the man is worn out. He lives in secret sins. He tries to break away—his conscience upbraids him with ingratitude—with inconsistency—with breaking his vows; and then come his sins, rushing in like a torrent, driving out thought—banishing reflection, leading the soul captive—and making it a slave to sin. The passions subside—the temptations conquer and retire, when the conscience begins to grind the soul. In this way premature old age, irritability, misanthropy, are brought on—the soul groaning in agony—but still in heavy chains!

3. Secret sins return often.

Let it ever dwell in the memory that what returns often, forms the habits, controls the soul, and makes the man. It is not the fever-fit, which returns once in a great while, that is so dreadful. But that which comes often will burn and destroy the patient. Let temptations come upon the soul only once or twice in a year, and it can recover from the shock—it can brace itself up, it can set a double guard—it can be ready the next time. But if it comes frequently—giving the conscience no time to recover her power—the soul no time to form new and contrary habits;—then, those temptations are awful indeed. Other temptations can occur only occasionally. You can be tempted to dishonesty only when you are making a bargain; to slander only when you are in conversation; to dissipation only when in company—to break the Sabbath only when it returns; but at *all times* you carry your heart with you: at all times you can turn your thoughts within, and indulge in secret sins. In the morning you will, or will not worship God in the closet; you will, or will not read his word; you will, or will not examine the heart, and repeat this worship at evening. The morning and the evening return every

day—you will have the temptation to sin return every day—and, if not very careful, you will fall every day.

Peter had a temptation come—it was a new one—it overwhelmed him; he sinned; but he repented and recovered. Judas indulged in secret sins—he carried the bag constantly, and sinned constantly: and it made him so covetous that he could sell his Lord for money; it turned his heart into the heart of a devil, and it would have been good for that man had he never been born.

These sins which return often destroy the soul. Could you read the heart, the aching heart of the Christian, who is striving to conquer his sins, you would find that he is the most deeply burdened with those sins and habits which he formed before his conversion. They had so eaten into the soul—so become a part of the fixed habits of the man, that he still groans under their dominion!

4. Secret sins counteract and destroy the means of grace!

It is sometimes a wonder to many, why it is that this and that child of pious parents is not converted from sin and brought to God; why this and that one can read the Word of God, and receive it as his truth, and yet not by it be made wise unto salvation; and especially is it a matter of wonder and surprise that so many can regularly come to the house of God, hear the gospel faithfully preached, and yet remain still under the dominion of sin. Perhaps you have wondered how it is that *you* are still as you are, notwithstanding all the means of grace which you enjoy. The reason is very plain: you may not commit open sin—sin seen by the eye of man—but you may be under the dominion of secret sin. The Bible is a dead letter to such a person. The preached gospel is foolishness to such a person. Why, you might have the cloud of God, and the pillar of fire hang over you—you might stand at the foot of Sinai, when God came down and preached; you might hear Isaiah, or the divine Redeemer, or the eloquent Paul, or the vehement Peter; or any preaching, and *all* preaching, and if you live in secret sin, you are not converted! The reason is, the spirit of God does not come to set home truth upon your heart—does not seal the soul to the day of redemption. Nothing is more loathsome to the pure Spirit of God, than the heart which is constantly indulging in secret sins. He does and will leave such a heart. And then the means of grace will do no good. Probably this is the *great* reason why the blessed Spirit of God visits us so seldom—why he tarries so short a time. O! if the sins of this audience, as they rise up in the heart, should be whispered back from the listening heavens, you would be amazed at their number—their frequency—but you would not be amazed that the Spirit of God does not abide with us, nor that the means of grace are so inefficient! Ah! you may find fault with the doctrines of the Bible, you may

blame the preacher that you are not converted; but your blood, dear hearer, be on thine own head. The deep-rooted sins of the heart; those dear sins which you cherish in secret, they palsy your heart, they stop your ears, they blind the eyes: they are the damning sins of the soul!

5. Secret sins give the tempter great power over you.

The great adversary of souls, as a roaring lion goeth about seeking whom he may devour. And he lays his plans wisely. He suits his temptations to the circumstances of those whom he would tempt. When he finds that he can lead a man to hardness of heart in any one way, his temptations on other points seem to be few and trifling. For example, if he can tempt a man to become a hypocrite, and to feel self-righteous, he will let him alone on other points, while he keeps *this* fire continually burning. If he finds a man who is relying on his morality and good life for salvation, he will tempt him very little to be dishonest or immoral. You will frequently see men who rely on their morality for salvation—who seem to have few or no temptations to be dishonest; they really have but few; and the reason is, the great tempter sees them safe: sees them building up a hope on their own righteousness, and he has no disposition to tear it away by tempting them to open sins! He will tempt you less to open noon-day sins, if he sees that you live in secret sins. And it is secret sins which he specially loves to have you cherish. For they do not alarm you—do not startle you—and he can whisper them in the ear when you are alone and off your guard. There is nothing which will give the tempter such power over you, as to indulge in secret sins. The secret doors of the heart are thus always open, and he has unimpeded access to the soul. The great mass of sin which is committed is secret sin; and it is this, above all others, and beyond all others, that ruins the soul forever. Oh! if you would make damnation doubly sure, cherish those secret sins, which, like a silent canker, eat into the soul, and destroy your peace here and forever!

May I now ask your attention to the remedies for secret sins?

1. Feel that they ARE sins.

It is too common to feel that nothing is sin which does not hurt our fellow-men. If their property or reputation be not injured—if they be not injured by *example*, we are apt to feel that we are free. Now, we do not hurt men *directly* by secret sins. But is all sin to be against men? By no means. Secret sins are against ourselves; they are against the health of the body; are against the peace of the mind, the peace of conscience; against purity and strength of intellect, (for it could be easily proved to you that a man's intellect is debased, and weakened, and enfeebled by secret sins;) but they are also against God, the highest, purest, holiest, most perfect, and

glorious being in the universe. Oh! remember that when you sin in secret, you may not injure men so much as you would by *open* sinning, but you may put yourself more completely, entirely, and forever under the dominion of sin; you may grieve and drive the spirit of God away forever; you may draw down the curse of God, which will leave you under the full power of sin. Every sin is against the great God; is under his eye; it is written in the book of his memory; and it will come up for review at the last great day of trial.

2. If you would be cleansed from secret sins, you must be much in prayer.

There is an old proverb which is to the point, "that praying will make us leave off sinning; and sinning will make us leave off praying." It is strictly true. The two things cannot go together. David felt his need of help from on high. "Cleanse thou me from secret faults; let no iniquities have dominion over me." I need not stop to *prove* that if you pray you will stop sinning; that is, if you pray sincerely and daily. I need not tell *how* the result will follow. The fact cannot be questioned. You go to God morning and evening in prayer, and you dare not go and sin either in public or in secret. His eye will be felt; his presence will be felt; his Spirit will be there to aid; and the soul will be brought under him. I would say to you, that of all remedies for sin, prayer is the most effectual; and without this, all other remedies will fail. No resolutions will avail; they will pass out of mind; vigilance will sleep; conscience will be lulled; but the strength which true prayer draws down will never fail you. But it must be prayer; daily; fervent, humble, sincere. You must not first sin, and then feel remorse, and go away and pray; but you must first pray, and then resist temptation.

My hearers, while I do not *name* those secret companions of yours; those sins which are weighing down your soul; keeping away peace and joy in the Holy Ghost; which separate between you and God, I *do* ask, do you pray to God daily, constantly, fervently? By other means you may lop off here and there a branch; but by none other will you cut down the tree. This is the only axe that will reach the root of the tree and destroy it.

3. If you would be cleansed from secret sins, fly from temptations.

With one hand you may hold a stone in its place before it begins to roll down the steep hill-side; but after it has once begun to roll, you would resist in vain. You cannot conquer sin by tampering with it. It can be done only by resisting the very first temptations to it.

If you are tempted to sin by particular companions; in particular places; at particular hours; or in particular circumstances, the only possible way is to avoid the temptation. Flee

from it as for life! Had Lot's wife resisted the first wish to look back, she had not lost her life. Had David crushed the first sinful wish, or had he fled at once from temptation, he had not fallen as he did fall. And so it is with every one; and with all sins. As it regards public sins, you will be likely to do so. If you are tempted to intemperance, you will naturally shun the companions, the places, or the hours, by which you have been tempted. But in regard to the sins of the heart you are in danger of not doing so.

Be careful not to trust yourself alone, except barely long enough for secret devotion. Be careful and watch over the heart, and not give way to roving thoughts, or to the delicious dreams of reverie; the flames which they kindle will scorch the soul. Make it a part of every day's work to learn something about God's Word which you never knew before. Make it the man of your counsel, and the guide of your life. Keep a good book in your room; and from that draw materials for thought and reflection. Keep the mind full of good thoughts, and constantly add to your mental furniture.

4. If you would be free from secret sins, be constantly mindful of the presence of God.

You may have seen a man given to profaneness; whose throat was an open sepulchre, restrained and checked by the presence of a man who loathed the taking of God's name in vain. You do not suppose that a man could plot treason, if he were conscious that the eye of the best patriot in the land was upon him! The eye of a mere mortal can control the tongue of blasphemy, and check the soul great in sin. How *much* more will the eye of the great God do it, if you will remember the presence of that eye! We are apt to shut God out of the thoughts; but remember when you sin, though the eye of man cannot see you; though the tongue of man cannot reprove you, yet there is *one* present who sees all! No veil of midnight can shut Him out. No bolting of the door can keep Him away. The sun in his brightness looks not more directly down upon you, than does the eye of our God!

Go to the secrecy of your chamber, and there sin, and you hear him crying in your ears, "Oh! do not that abominable thing which I hate!" You hear him cry, "Hell is veiled before me, and destruction hath no covering!" Oh! you would not, you could not, you would not *dare* to live in sin; secret sin; any sin; if you only realized that God is with you at all times, in all places, marking down your sins in the books of the judgment!

My hearers, I speak to you with the more feeling and earnestness to-day, because I do believe your great danger of losing the soul, and becoming the everlasting enemy of God, arises, not so much from your open, as from your secret sins. They seem small; seem of little consequence; but these are

the little foxes which destroy the vines. Are you not ashamed to commit open sins, because man will see you? And should you not be ashamed to commit secret sins, when God sees you? Are you afraid of the rebukes and the reproaches of man; the loss of character among worms of the dust? and O! are you not afraid of the reproaches of conscience to eternity; afraid of the eternal wrath and displeasure of the great God?

The contest for your *soul* is now going on. Sin has entered your heart; the tempter hath found an highway to that heart; your passions, your appetites, your habits, your feelings, all draw you into sin; while conscience, and light, and truth, and mercy, and the Spirit of God, try to bring you back to heaven! This contest is sometimes so severe that you are sensible of it; your color comes and goes; the spirit; the deathless spirit within you shudders, and you are afraid! Oh! when will this contest end? When will you slay every sin; *all* sin; bring all out, as the magicians of Ephesus did their corrupting books, and burn them! *When* will you? Till you *do*, sin will rule you; sin will hurry you onward, onward, and far away from righteousness, and peace, and God!

SERMON CCLXVI.

BY REV. JOHN TODD.

SELFISHNESS THE GREAT SIN.

PHIL. ii.21.—*All men seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ's.*

THE clouds which gather in the sky, and the waters which they pour over the earth, are ministers to an end. The waters minister to the earth; the earth ministers to the grass, and the tree, the grass and the tree minister to the cattle, the flocks, and the fowls of the air; these again, have an end, and minister to the wants, the comforts, and the luxuries of man. But man does not minister to the cloud, the stream, the earth, the grass nor the beast; he was was not made to be the servant of either, or all of these.

What, then, is *his* end? Where does *he* centre, since everything else centres in him? He must stop at *himself*, and *live* for himself; or else he must go up higher, and make *God* his centre, and the object for which he lives. Which *ought* he to do?

You will say he *ought* to make *God* the centre of all, and the object, above all others, of his aims. So says the conscience; and so says the Bible. But *do* men do this? Do *we?* or is the text true, all men seek their own—not the things of Jesus Christ?

But, you will say, may I not seek my own—my own happiness? Is there not a natural self-love, deeply planted in every heart, and which is lawful? I reply, Yes, there is. We are commanded to preserve our own lives, to take care of character, to take care of all our true interests for time and eternity. We are directed to love our neighbor as ourselves, which we could not do, unless we first loved ourselves: and when we are commanded to lay down our lives for God, we are not to put off this self-love for Christ, we have it still appealed to, in the offers of eternal life as a reward.

Nor does *religion* destroy this, but on the contrary, the Christian loves himself, as he would love *any* instrument with which to honor God.

Every creature is made to honor God; and when the Christian sees himself (an immortal being) brought back to become a means of promoting God's glory, he cannot but rejoice.

But though you may love yourself, and seek to gratify yourself, in eating, in drinking, in dress, in anything till you come to a certain *point;* yet, pass *beyond* that point, and it becomes sinful. Where, then, *is that point?* I reply, it is where you place your desires or will before God's; it is where he has pronounced it to be sinful.

You may eat and drink, because, to a certain extent, it gratifies yourself; but the moment you do not eat and drink, and do all for the sake of glorifying God, it is sinful. You may plough, or seek for property in any other labors, but if you make *yourself* the chief end, it becomes sin. Thus, the ploughing of the wicked is sin. You may sacrifice or pray; but if you do it merely to ease your conscience—to secure your own exclusively—it is an abomination to the Lord.

All sin consists in seeking your own happiness, without regard to God, or anybody else. Thus *envy* is *self*—grieved that you have not, and want what somebody else has—and if carried out, it would take what it wants at any expense of the happiness of others—that is, it would become murder. *Impatience* is *self*, checked in its enjoyments; or uneasy because enjoyments do not flow fast enough. *Wrath* is *self*—defending self against some evils, real or imaginary, which have been, or are to be received. *Pride* is a constant desire to have self raised above others—to be admired, to be as gods, and if carried out, would not stop short of the throne of God. Hence, *all sin* is seeking to gratify *self* in some way or other without regard to the commandments of God, or the happiness of others. Hence, in Romans men are said to live to sin, while in Corinthians they are said to live to themselves, and in my text "all men seek their own."

Hence too, it is so difficult to convert the soul to God; it is the renouncing self, which has been the God and the master of the soul, and enthroning Jehovah in its place.

What I have said will involve the following propositions which I propose briefly to prove.

1. That men naturally prefer themselves to God. This is seen in the estimation in which we hold ourselves. Who does not think too highly of himself, more highly than others do of him—his talents, standing, influence! Who does not in his thoughts, compare himself with those below him, rather than with those above him. Who does not secretly cherish the thought that those above him are really inferior to himself, though some fortuitous circumstance may now give them some little superiority?

It is seen in our taking credit to our own wisdom in all that we accomplish. When men are crossed and disappointed they charge the blame—where? Not to themselves, but to *luck*, to *fortune*, to their *stars*, and to other causes! When they are prospered they give credit to themselves; "is not this great

Babylon which I have builded? for the house of the kingdom, by the might of my power, and for the honor of my majesty?"

See that worm of the dust walking on the battlement of his palace, and talking about his power, and his majesty—making in himself a god, and preferring himself to Him who creates nations, and hangs the heavens beaming in glory over him.

There was a certain rich man, and he said I will pull down, I will build greater; I will say to my soul, eat, drink; thou hast much goods laid up for thee, and all was for himself! And there came a voice from heaven, thou fool! thou hast preferred thyself to God, yet for all this God will bring thee unto Judgment! Have you not seen cases very similar? Do not men prefer themselves to God?

See how we love flattery!

Four hundred and fifty prophets shall stand and flatter Ahab; and he is pleased: one shall tell him the truth, and he commands Amon, the governor of the city, to put him in the dungeon, and feed him on the bread and water of affliction.

The people shall shout to Herod that his is the voice of a God, and that poor man shall receive it all and be a god, till the Eternal rises up and hurls him into the dust of death!

Let the commands of God come in the way of the human heart; and see if the head of John, the greatest prophet ever born of woman, will not be cut off!

Our preferring ourselves to God is seen again, in our being so troubled at the injuries which we receive, and not at all troubled by those which GOD receives. I can give you a case exactly in point. Saul was commanded by God to destroy the Amalekites, even their cattle; but he was so avaricious that he chose to set aside God's wishes, and follow his own. He does it. And when Samuel reproves him, what does he say?

Why, that he spared the cattle in honor of God by devoting them as sacrifices! Too religious to obey God! And when Samuel denounces the judgment of God upon his avarice and hypocrisy, is he concerned because he has dishonored GOD. No, not in the least; but he begs that his own honor may be provided for, and begs Samuel to honor him before the elders of Israel! And yet this same man wanted to kill his own son, Jonathan, because he tasted a little honey in the hour of victory, not even knowing that Saul had forbidden it! So jealous for his own honor, and so indifferent to that of God! Is not this just what human nature *now* is? Let a merchant be proved to be dishonest, and at what are he and his friends grieved? Because God has been despised and his commands trampled on; or because his own reputation has been tarnished?

A child grows up in indulgence; becomes idle, vicious, wicked, and loses all character. At what is the sorrow? That he is dishonoring God, his Maker, or his family?

We command those under us to do so and so; we are offended if they do not just as we wish them to do; and yet, perhaps the same day, we break the express commands of God, and go to our pillows entirely unconcerned!

The same thing is seen again, in our dependence upon ourselves, and not upon God.

You are going to undertake this and that business; its success depends on the winds, the waves, or on a thousand circumstances which you cannot control.

And you commence it, and carry it on, trusting to your own industry, prudence, judgment and skill, without asking the direction or the blessing of God upon it! What is this, but putting yourself in the place of God, and making a god of yourself?

You thus deprive God of the adoration of your heart, of the supremacy in your souls, and thus his authority is thrown off. He receives not homage for his aid, nor thanks for his goodness.

Is this right? Is it honest towards Him, and yet is it not what men do every day? Are there not those who thus serve self, and sin against light, row against the tide, and prostitute conscience in order to serve self, forgetting that high and lofty One whose care must every moment of our lives be with us, or we and our plans all perish?

II. The second proposition which I propose to prove is, that men prefer not merely themselves, but anything else to God.

To see this, consider a moment, that they think of him less than all other things.

Men will think of their business,—how they may urge it forward;—of their pleasures, how they may increase them;—of their families, how they may advance them and put them forward into notice;—of their insults, how they may revenge them;—of their wrongs, how they may redress them;—or they will give their thoughts to reverie, and let them run waste for hours,—but in all this, how few thoughts have been given to God? Why—why do they think of any thing, and every thing, rather than God? Painful truth!—because they prefer all these to him!

The corn and the wine were given to Israel to honor God with; but when they used them to indulge in gluttony and drunkenness, they perverted the gifts.

The thoughts and the power of thought were given us with which to honor God; the heart should be the altar; and when you let the world take all these thoughts, you let, as an old French writer says, "the unclean birds of the air ravish the sacrifices or the altars of God, and carry them to their own nests."

Our greedy pursuit of the world, shows that we prefer any thing for our happiness rather than God.

There can be no doubt but the old proverb is as true to-day as it ever was;—that is, "what a man pursues beyond all other things, that he esteems his chief good." This is too plain to admit of proof. If a man who might be honored and respected and useful, prefers the society of the low, the vile, and the degraded, we know, it is because he is happier there.

If a man spends his life in pursuing pleasure, we know that he esteems that his highest happiness.

Now do we not do so,—make ourselves slaves to the world, —so that we hardly have time to eat, or to sleep, or to think or to serve God, so that even on the Sabbath, during the hour we spend in his courts, we can hardly keep the world and the business of the world out?

Men prefer sensual pleasures to God.

By this I mean, that you can get men to spend more thought, more time, more money, in the luxuries of the table, than they give of either of these to God;—perhaps more in one year than they give to God in all their lives.

How many would feel as if they were prodigies of goodness should they give to God as much in a single year, as they bestow upon the luxuries of the table alone, which is necessary for life, or for health!

How many spend ten times as much every year for what will gratify the taste, or the eye, as they have given to God in all their lives!—and yet, can we pretend that we do not prefer these to God!

Need I speak of those who debase every faculty that is noble and godlike, to pursue those pleasures which the very brutes pursue only by instinct! these have been called "sublimated brutes," but wrongfully—for a brute sublimated would be far their superiors!

They prefer God as their chief good?—No—they seek their happiness in what the mere animal leaves, in what gives joy to unclean spirits only.

Language may not name, imagination may not dwell upon, what men, who would fight a duel to prove themselves to be honorable and noble,—what such men make the object of their choice rather than the ever blessed God! The creature, in its lowest vileness is preferred to the Creator; the world, which is God's footstool, is exalted above His throne! Oh! the patience of God! while we place our desires, and lusts, and the basest of all things beside Him, and prefer them to Him—prefer a carcass to immortal life—how does He endure us!

The same thing is seen in our honoring men more than God.

Let a friend invite you to a feast, and you feel that you must go: let him invite you to visit his beautiful residence, and you must go; but when God invites you to meet Him morning and evening in prayer, what do you do? Let Him invite you to come to His table, and what do you do? Why do you say "you

are not worthy?" But He tells you His table is not for the worthy, but the unworthy; He calls not the righteous, but the sinner to repentance!

Let a man of fair and honorable character be introduced to you, and how kindly do you treat him, honor him, and show your whole family that you honor and respect him. This is right. But when the Lord Jesus Christ is introduced to you, do you take Him home to your family, invite Him to your table—honor Him before all who come to your dwelling? Why do you not? Because you prefer not to have His society!

The same thing is seen again in your honoring the instrument of your prosperity more than God.

The heathen used to worship the arms with which they obtained their victories. This was, and is still very common, because very natural. The fishermen of old used "to sacrifice to their net, and burn incense to their clay," because they preferred to honor the instrument rather than the author of their gifts. Who does not know that men will honor the instrument of their prosperity, more than Him who created the instrument? The scholar will honor the institution which educated him; the merchant the ships which brought his goods; the sportsman his horse: and all men that which is the instrument of good. Go to the bedside of the man who is just recovering from severe sickness, and see if he be not more ready to speak of his physician and his cure, than of that God, whose hand alone holds the issues of life and of death? Why do we do this, in all our relations and circumstances of life, except that we wish to shut God out of the mind as fully as possible?

More than one king has had altars erected, and had sacrifices offered to him as to a god? Why did they? Because the heart of man lifts him up, and makes himself believe he is worthy of divine honors. No man ever felt that he was honored enough; for if we think well of ourselves, we naturally feel that others ought also to think well of us. But this is not all. We not only shut God out of our own hearts, but we wish to fill other hearts with ourselves—so full that God shall be shut out there also. Do you suppose that those kings who received sacrifices and incense, were acting out of nature; or that others, in their circumstances, would not have done just so, and we among the rest? The heart that would fill itself *with* itself, and enthrone *self* there, would enthrone itself in the next heart, and the next, and in every heart in the universe—and this would indeed displace God. When the King of Babylon cast the three men into the furnace heated seven times hotter than usual, was it because he cared for the senseless idol which he had set up, or was his wrath so hot because *his* authority was not respected?

For what has God given us food, and home, and the means of enjoyment? Is it not that we may make all these things

helps, and everything around us helps, by which we may pass over the earth on our way to immortality.

Why do men take the creatures which God has made, wring groans from them, and wear them out as they minister to their pleasures? Is it because these are the ends for which God made them? or is it because their ends are perverted?

What is the real, actual condition of the human heart? There is a being whom the Bible denominates the devil. He once walked on the sea of glass. Among the sons of light, he was the bright, morning star. He thought he would be like God, and equal to God. He brought down the arm of Omnipotence upon himself, and it placed him in a world far from heaven. Does he not know that there is a God whose arm he cannot resist; whose power he cannot brave; whose throne he cannot shake; whose plans he cannot thwart? And yet he sets himself up for a god; has altars all over the heathen world; tried to tempt Jesus to bend the knee to him, if only for a moment. Why does he do so? Because his heart is full of sin, and conscience cannot restrain, and hope cannot reach him, because he is a vessel full of sin, and hates, and would dethrone, if possible, God himself. Does the Bible mean nothing when it thus tells us of him, and then tells us we are of the same seed—the seed of the serpent; that he is the God of this world, and that he works in the children of disobedience; helps them, tempts them, blinds them, flatters them, destroys them? This is the condition of the human heart; this is human nature sunken and fallen; and just as yours and mine are, unless the grace of God has created us anew in Jesus.

Ah! we may exalt self, and make a god of it; but while we do it, there is a frown gathering on the brow of God which will destroy us.

We good! when we do not go to God in prayer, unless we want His aid in some worldly scheme of aggrandizement; unless when we lie on the bed of sickness, and then try to pray and coax Him to spare us; unless we have a dear friend near the grave, and then we try to bribe Him to raise that friend up by our prayers and tears! We good! when we acknowledge not God in our daily business and pursuits, and yet are impatient and ready to impeach Him if they go wrong? We good! when in all our aims not one in a thousand tends to God or to His glory! when we live as far from Him as we can, and keep this distance always between Him and us? We good! when we do not remember Him in our mercies, nor receive His richest of all gifts with thankfulness and gratitude!

We good! when we do not daily converse with Him, and commune with Him, and receive light from His Word!

When we know that we wander daily, and yet rather go still further off than to return to Him with a contrite, broken heart,

asking forgiveness, when we do not read His Word—honor His Son—imitate Him in our lives!

Say, dear hearer, are we good! good enough to live as we do and to die as we are.

Oh! hearer, we may forget our condition, and our relations to God; we may deny them; we may wish they were different; but all this will do no good! All men seek their own ends; their own happiness, regardless of God and of the universe, till created in Christ Jesus unto good works.

What then is to be done? To be done? Why, cease to do evil; cease to be supremely selfish; cease to dethrone God from your heart; cease to live for yourself; cease to depose God, while you place sin on his throne; cease to make self the deity, while the almighty Creator, Preserver and Redeemer, is put off and rejected, while the soul chases shadows, flies to broken cisterns, and feeds on ashes!

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SERMON CCLXVII.

BY REV. HOLLIS READ.

THE SACREDNESS OF THE SANCTUARY.

Gen. xxviii. 17.—*And he was afraid and said, how awful is this place! this is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven.*

Eccl. v. 1.—*Keep thy foot when thou goest to the house of God, and be more ready to hear than to give the sacrifice of fools; for they consider not that they do evil.*

In these two passages of scripture, we have an admirable idea of the feelings with which we ought to regard the house of God, and of the deportment which becomes us when we are within its sacred enclosure.

Keep thy foot when thou goest to the house of God—be attentive and solemn, observe order and decorum. Or it may refer to the oriental custom of putting off the shoes from the feet on entering a holy place; and the idea is nearly the same—the idea of the sanctity of the place, and the sacred deportment that becomes such a place. Be more ready to hear than to give the sacrifice of fools. "Hear" is often put for *obey*. The term "sacrifice" refers to the service and worship of the house of God; and the epithet "fools" is here used, as often in the writing of the wise king of Israel, to denote all such as do not choose the fear of the Lord. In his judgment none are wise but they who have that wisdom that is from above. The "sacrifice of fools," then, means a formal, external service; a sacrifice of the lips and of the hands, which does not engage the

heart. Nothing but a spiritual service, the sacrifice of a warm and sincere heart can be pleasing in the sight of Him with whom we have to do. He is a *spirit*, and no other worship is suited to His nature. Hence they who come into the Sanctuary, but do not solemnly and heartily worship God there, are guilty of solemn mockery. They commit abomination under the pretext of offering service to God. "They consider not that they do evil."

But they who duly appreciate the sacredness of the Lord's house, are ready to exclaim, as they enter the consecrated walls, or stand in the awful presence of their God, adoring, praising, confessing, or suing for mercy; or as they sit and hear the momentous truths of God and of heaven, *How awful is this place; this is none other but the house of God; this is the gate of heaven.* They feel that they are in the audience chamber of the great Jehovah. They feel that holiness becomes his house forever.

The attention of the reader is invited to the following thoughts and suggestions respecting the Sanctuary.

1. *Its sacredness.*

The very name that we have here applied to it, suggests its sanctity. It is called the house of God—the Lord's house—the place where prayer is wont to be made—the temple of God—the dwelling place of his saints—the place where his honor dwells—all which imply that it ought to be regarded as a *holy place.*

The nature of the instructions that are here given, and of the services that are here performed, are such as to spread about it a sacred character. God and eternity—man and his immortal destiny—the divine law and its awful sanctions—Christ and his matchless love to ruined man—death—judgment—heaven—hell—are the awful themes of discourse that constitute the instructions of this house. Is there nothing in the nature of these subjects that is calculated to solemnize the mind, and to clothe the place where they are, from week to week imparted, with awe? If there were nothing but the ordinary influence of the association of ideas, we should suppose the Sanctuary could never be regarded with any other feelings, than those of profound reverence.

But there is everything in the nature of the truths themselves that cannot but secure this, wherever they are allowed to exert their legitimate influence. The attentive and applying hearer of such truths, is continually arraigned before the Judge of all the earth. He here learns whence he is—what he is—and whither he is tending. He is here placed before a mirror that exactly reflects his *own image.* He sees all his moral beauty—all his moral deformity.

He is here, too, brought into the more immediate presence of the Deity. The infinite excellence of God—his own comparative insignificance; the yet greater distance made by sin; the ineffable purity of the godhead, and his own impurity and utter worthlessness, cannot but constrain him to cry out, *How dreadful is this place! it is none other than the house of God.*

It would seem that none but the careless, the thoughtless, the decidedly irreligious—I had almost said, the infidel, conld regard the house of God in any other light than that of a sacred and solemn place.

Its services are those of prayer and praise, drawing near to God, inviting his special presence, confessing and craving pardon; all which are suited to produce the feeling that God is in the place. And do we—*can* we for a moment feel there is no peculiar sacredness in that place, where He, that is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity, and who chargest his angels with folly, designs to be present? Surely, the pious mind ought never—it can never, divest itself of that holy awe and profound reverence, which so naturally invests the Sanctuary. I say, so naturally invests the Sanctuary, for there is a feeling aside from the effusions of genuine piety, that awes the mind, in the place where a Deity is professedly worshipped. The Deity may be a false one, or it may be a false worship paid to a true Deity, yet the principle is every where more or less recognized.

Go into a Roman Catholic place of worship, and you will find it so there. You will see no levity; (except it be among Protestant spectators;) no vacant gazing; no greetings of friends, and exchange of compliments; no inquiries after the news of the day; no laughing, whispering, and talking on the ordinary business of the week. Each worshipper quietly enters, overawed, apparently, by the sanctity of the place; approaches the sacred fount, and crosses himself with the holy water; kneels; says his prayers, or repeats the lesson of the day; goes through the unmeaning ceremonies of the occasion, and retires in the same unostentatious manner.

His religion may be hypocritical—his faith false—his moral character bad, and all his services hollow and insincere, yet reason teaches the propriety of preserving inviolate the sanctity of God's house.

Or you may go into a Mohammedan mosque, and you will find the same stillness, and order, and awful solemnity, in that place of reputed worship. Each intended worshipper approaches the temple with a solemn air; puts off his shoes from his feet, because the ground on which he stands is holy. He then kneels towards the holy city, and repeats his prayers; then seats himself before the

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Moolah, or priest, and, apparently, with undivided and solemn attention, listens to the instructions of the day. Conversation of any kind, levity, friendly salutations, and everything that pertains to the common business or pleasure of life, are wholly shut out from the mosque, as altogether *unsuited* to the place. However vile a Mohammedan may be, (and his moral character is generally bad,) yet he would be shocked—his sense of propriety would revolt at any such desecration of a place where prayer is wont to be made. He is transacting business with his God, and he must, he says, be solemn.

Or you may go into a Hindoo temple, and you will be struck with the same interesting fact. Vile and false as their worship is, corrupt as are their reputed gods, and immoral as the worshippers are, and as senseless as appear their services, they are all pervaded with an air of profound solemnity. They softly tread the ground with uncovered feet. No *clattering doors*, or noisy *footsteps*, disturb the sacred stillness of the place. They speak with a softened, suppressed voice. They bow down, they praise their gods of wood and stone. They deposit their offerings, and retire with the same measured solemnity. But, when out of sight of his god, he is the same immoral heathen as he was before. Ask him why he appeared solemn in the temple, and he will tell you, "he was then *in the presence of his god*, and how could he be otherwise?" But, as he went from his temple, he went out from the presence of his god.

Christians believe they are always in the presence of their God, but that they are more peculiarly so when in the Sanctuary. How sacred, then, ought they to regard the place where they meet to invoke the presence of the great Jehovah, and to negotiate on things that pertain to their eternal well-being. They cannot, if they feel as they ought, but exclaim, *How dreadful is this place!*

The tabernacle, and afterwards the temple, was regarded in this light, whenever the Jewish church were in a prosperous condition. No one might enter into the holy of holies but the High Priest, and he but once a year. Religion declined wherever the house of God was secularized and profaned. When men began to buy and sell in the temple—when money-changers occupied the sacred place, religion had degenerated into formality—the piety of the heart into the superstition of the head.

Hence we may infer—

2. *The importance of preserving the sacredness of the Sanctuary.*

If the benefits of a place of public worship, are such as have *generally been* supposed, no other argument would be required to show *the importance of giving* a high character of sanctity to the place

where these privileges may be enjoyed. If the Sanctuary be the place where are given instructions of the most momentous and solemn import that can occupy the mind of immortal man; if it be the place of prayer—the place where God invites the multitude of his worshippers to come before Him, giving them the most precious promises, that he will be with them, and bless them; if it be the place of *God's peculiar presence*, where he will deign to draw near to his people, to commune with them and be gracious to them; if it be pre-eminently, the *gate of Heaven*—the spot on which, in preference to all others, God will display the riches of his grace in the regeneration of sinners, and the sanctification of his saints; if it be the *place of delight to the people of God*—where God delights himself to dwell, and there to make his people rejoice; if it be the place from which go out those principles and influences that soften the manners of a people, refine their sensibilities, elevate the standard of their morality, and make them respectable and prosperous; if it be the radiating point from which goes a wholesome and virtuous public sentiment,—then, we need go no further to inquire whether it be a matter of vital importance to preserve entire the holy respect and profound reverence that is due to the house of God. Its importance is commensurate with the value of the benefits and privileges here to be enjoyed.

Demolish the Sanctuary, and discard its services and instructions, and you have blotted out from the moral landscape every thing on which the eye delights to dwell. The shades of death settle down on that spot—the thick darkness of Paganism envelops it, when the light of truth, emanating from the Santuary, is once withdrawn. You need only travel through a parish, and take but a very superficial view of the temporal condition of the people, to judge pretty accurately what influence the truths of God's house have exerted on them. If they are industrious, thriving, temperate, intelligent, and enterprising, you may be sure they respect the things of divine revelation—revere God's holy day, and delight to sit and hear the words of soberness and truth in the place where God's honor dwells. Do you find the people moral, virtuous, benevolent, patriotic? you may be sure they have never learned these things from Hindoo Shastras, or in Hindoo temples. Nor have they been taught them at the feet of Infidelity. They are either, directly, as received from the sarced desk, or, indirectly, as taken second hand from those who drew them from the same fountain, the principles of divine truth, as contained in God's holy book.

Would *you estimate the* value of what, in point of morals, you

gain from the public services of God's house, you must contrast Christian morality with heathen morality, and the *difference* will give you some clew by which to estimate the worth of a well regulated and a well furnished house of worship. The ignorance, filth, and degradation; the barbarism, licentiousness, and indolence; the dishonesty, falsehood, and hypocrisy of the heathen world, are but the legitimate results of the doctrines taught in their sacred books, and expounded by their priests, in the services of their temples.

Could the infidel succeed in obliterating, as he wishes, the last vestage of Christianity from our land—could he demolish our churches, break down our pulpits, burn our bibles, arrest the streams of benevolence that flow out from the fountain of Christianity to fertilize the waste places of the earth, he would only gain the fearful pre-eminence of standing on the ruins of all that is lovely and excellent in the world. Desolations would surround him. Instead of a holy religion that "over-cometh the world," purifieth the heart, and worketh by love, men would degenerate as fast as possible into some of the various forms of Idolatry. Infidelity and Atheism will never satisfy a people. Man is a religious being. Reason and conscience send up a united remonstrance against the efforts of all such as would expel a Deity from the universe. But, as a wicked heart demurs, and generally overrules their decisions in favor of the worship of the true God, a compromise is made in favor of Idolatry. Reason, and conscience, in this, secure the abstract acknowledgment of the *existence* of a God, while a perverse heart claims the prerogative of clothing this Deity with a *character* to suit itself. Idolatry, is the state into which corrupt nature, if not arrested in its downward course, will finally settle. This is the stagnation of human depravity.

And in proportion as you turn your back on the Sanctuary, you turn away from that Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world. You despise the only means, and oppose the only retrieving circumstances, that can save our world from a general corruption. Forsake the assembling of yourselves together—forego the benefits of a place of public worship, and you take the most effectual means in your power, to entail on your society the horrors of barbarism.

What do you already find to be the manners of those who have taken their lessons in ethics at the tippling house, in the gambling room, or at the brothel? Do you find them refined and courteous, chaste and noble? or do you find them coarse, irritable, revengeful, and vulgar? Or your tavern haunters, your scoffers at evangelical *religion; your deserters* of the house of God; your profane swearers;

your sabbath breakers. Are these the men to whom you look to perform the offices of charity and mercy? will they be the companions of your afflictions and pour into your wounded spirits the consolatory balm? Will they apply the broad, unflinching shoulder beneath the ark of the public honor, and bear it on when assailed by uncircumcised hands? Can you *depend* on such men for support in any philanthropic or moral cause? And are these the men that you would have give character to your children, or give shape to the morals of your society? Where, but in the Sancturry, would you select your models? Where, but in the doctrines and precepts here taught, do you find the fundamental principles of good manners, refined sensibilities, and correct morals? And where but in these sacred enclosures, do a people imbibe sentiments of self-respect, and sentiments that command the respect of others?

If it be important to know God; to know ourselves; to understand our relation to the great Author and Preserver of our being; to be made acquainted with our mutual duties to our fellows; to know what we are by nature, what by sin, and what we may be by grace; to study our eternal destinies,—then it is of the first importance that we cherish such views and feelings in regard to the Sanctuary as will secure the great ends for which it is established. If we lightly esteem God's house, we shall lightly esteem his ordinances.

There is no spot on earth where instructions so varied and comprehensive, so sublime and soul-stirring, so practical and important, are to be received, as in the house of God. The Bible, the grand fountain of all truth, is the text book. Its truths are here to be drawn out, illustrated, and enforced. Here the bread of life is to be *divided*, and every one to receive his portion.

Creation, Providence, and Redemption, are the three great truths that form the theme of discourse here. Man cannot expatiate on, or listen to subjects of more thrilling interest to himself.

A place consecrated to the discussion of these momentous topics, must be provided, and a ministry established and supported. It is through (what a thoughtless world may, if they please, call) *the foolishness of preaching*, that men are to be saved. This is God's constituted way of reconciling the world to himself. He has chosen the *truth*, as contained in his word, and so proclaimed and enforced by his ministers, as the means by which he begins, carries on, and finishes the redemption of the soul, and it is scarcely less true that he has chosen the Sanctuary as the place where he will honor the preached word and make it effectual to salvation. He sends help from the Sanctuary *and* strengthens his people out of Zion.

It is surely commendation enough of the house of God, that it is the radiating point of *divine knowledge*—the central position where you may stand and receive that wisdom that cometh from above—where you may learn what you are—what your fellow men are—in what relation you stand to them—what duties you owe them—where you may learn what God is—in what relation you stand to him—what his law is—how you have broken it, and how the breach may be so repaired that you may be treated at the final judgment, and at last rewarded, as if you were not a transgressor. But it is a further commendation that you may, if the constant and attentive occupant of your seat in the sacred place, gain large and valuable accessions of subordinate knowledge. Not to say a *learned* ministry, but a moderately intelligent ministry, because in the course of the year the channel of communicating to a congregation an immense amount of valuable knowledge on a great variety of subjects. History, geography, the manners, customs, and usages of different nations; indeed the whole circle of science and literature, incidentally and indirectly at least, are made to illustrate and enforce the instructions of the pulpit, and to enlighten the mass of mind that frequents the house of God. If you will look about in your community, you will see a vast disparity in point of intelligence between those who are, and those who are not the regular attentive hearers of a preached gospel.

We find it to be a fact that where a people do not frequent [illegible] place of public worship, they suffer all the desolation [illegible] death. And why should they not? They will not come to the depository of divine blessings; and if left to cry, "my leanness, my leanness," it is because they will not come that they may be filled. Their hearts grow cold; their zeal is diminished; their minds are famished; they become worldly-minded, and soon are more the votaries of mammon than the servants of the living God. The further they get from the Sanctuary, the further they are from their God.

Exile yourself from the house of God, and you pursue the most effectual course to shut yourself out from the gracious influences of the Spirit, and to bid a wicked defiance to all the means of grace. Go search the annals of the church, and see how few you will find there, who, up to the time of their conversion, were habitual neglecters of the house of God.

Our text urges one other consideration why we should most sacredly preserve the honor of the Sanctuary. *It is the gate of heaven.*

It is pre-eminently the preparation ground for an entrance to the *upper Sanctuary.* Here are taught the first lessons of truth as pre-

paratory to the never-ending study of the Word and works of God in the fields of immortality. Here do babes in Christ begin to lisp the first accents of praise which eternal ages can only make perfect. Here begin to put forth the first germs of moral excellence, which must be transplanted into a finer clime, be warmed by a more congenial sun, and fanned by a celestial breeze, before they will attain their maturity. The church below is the nursery of the church above.

Where, if not in his own house, will God select the subjects of his grace? Where, if not in the place of prayer and praise, in the place of the exhibition of divine truth; in the more immediate presence of the divine glory, where God designs to hold converse with his people, invites them to draw near to him, to spread out their wants and make supplication, to unbosom their burdened souls, and pour their complaints into his ear; where he will hear, and answer, and forgive; where he will give a double portion of his spirit, and make known the power of his grace;—*where*, but in *such a place*, may sinners expect to meet God propitious, and ready to bless? If help come not from the Sanctuary, there is generally no help. They who have no delight where God is worshipped here below, can have no pleasure in the unceasing and holy services of the Temple above. If they cannot endure for a little time the sacredness and glory of this earthly tabernacle, how shall they endure the full radiance of heavenly glory, where in the never-ceasing presence of Jehovah, and where they cease not, day nor night, to ascribe honor and glory, and thanksgiving and praise to Him that sitteth on the throne, and to the Lamb forever?

Do you inquire the way to the New Jerusalem? Come to the Sanctuary, and here you hear one say, "I am the way, the truth, and the life." Are you doubting, amidst the conflicting opinions of human wisdom, and do you inquire after the *door?* Come to the Sanctuary, and here you will hear one say, in accents sweet as the compassion of heaven, "I am the door; by me if any man enter he shall be saved." Are you as stray sheep without a shepherd, wandering on the dark mountains of sin? Come to the Sanctuary, and hear the voice of one whose bowels yearn over you, say, "I am the good Shepherd: the good Shepherd giveth his life for his sheep." Where *Christ crucified* is preached, the power of God, and the wisdom of God, *there is the gate of heaven.*

How dreadful, then, is this place! How sacredly ought it to be regarded. It is none other than the house of God. It becomes, therefore, a *matter of vast moment* for us to inquire,

3. What is a becoming deportment in the house of God?

Here I might say, in a word, it is to *act as if God saw you*—as if you were really in his presence. Realize that you have, for an hour or two, stept out of the world—left its busy cares, its painful distractions, its fascinating smiles—and stept into *the house of God*. A solemn sense of a present God is an infallible guide to a becoming deportment in his house. Were you invited to participate in the hospitalities of a nobleman or a king, you could not adopt a better rule by which to govern your deportment there, than to act as if the eyes of your royal host were upon you. You would then be likely to act in accordance with his honor and his will as far as you knew them.

You would enter the gate of his palace duly impressed with the august character of the place; a solemn awe would steal over you as you were about to approach the person of your sovereign, and to stand among his honorable men. You would feel in honor bound to regard the rights and feelings of all that were present, and to honor the rules of the house.

Should you see one enter the royal palace with an air of unconcern—leave the door to shut itself with a violence that should arrest the attention and shock the sensibilities of all that are within; and walk across the hall with an independent and careless, if not a haughty mein, that seems to recognise the presence of no one but himself. Should you see this same individual, as soon as the confusion and turmoil of entrance were passed, engage in conversation with some one near, and manifest a deportment that should indicate a total disregard of the host and all his guests, as well as of the rules of the household, would you not think such a one wholly unworthy the honor which he now enjoyed? Would you not say that he dishonored the house, and did despite to the kindness and condescension of his host?

What, then, think you of the careless and indifferent, not to say the irreverent and profane attendant of the house of God—the earthly palace of the King of kings? Should you see one enter the Sanctuary as I have described, would you believe he had it in his heart to honor the Lord of the house, to conform to the laws of the household, and to respect the rights and feelings of his fellow-worshippers? They have a right—it is their undeniable privilege—to bow undisturbed, and to listen unmolested to the words of eternal life. Would you not rather suspect that such a one has not the fear of God before his eyes—that he appears in the Sanctuary for any purpose rather than to offer up to the Author *of his being*, and the giver of every good and perfect gift, a

sincere and spiritual worship? Such need not expect that they shall receive any thing of the Lord.

The deportment that becomes the house of God is grave, solemn, attentive and devout. No one may go to the house of God as a *spectator*. All are personally interested. All go (professedly) to meet God and to worship. All go to pray, to praise, to make melody in their hearts, to ponder the words of life, to hear what the Lord will say. Does one become your mouth, and lead in your supplications and thanksgivings; he prays not for himself, but as the organ of the congregation. He utters their words, and expresses thoughts and feelings for them, which they are mentally to offer up, sentence by sentence, as they drop from the lips of the minister. Not the minister alone prays, but the whole worshipping assembly should pray with the same degree of ardor and fixedness of attention. Do you say that gravity, and devotion, and zeal become the minister of the Sanctuary, because he *directs* your services? I say that the same gravity, and holy ardor, and devotedness become the whole body of worshippers, because they, in like manner, are unbosoming to a holy God, and, as poor and miserable sinners, asking mercy at his hands. Were you to look abroad, during the devotional part of the services, on many worshipping assemblies, and see the vacant stare of some, the irreverent posture of others, and the generally undevotional appearance of a third class, you would suppose the minister nearly the only one who pretended to pray—that he alone had aught for which to praise and adore—that he alone had sins to confess or mercies to crave.

None will question that a marked and undoubted solemnity ought to characterize the deportment of those who lead and direct the devotions of others. I have referred to the minister; but there is another class that, next to the minister, bear a most important part in the performance of public worship. I mean the *singers*, and all who perform in sacred music. They, too, lead our devotions. With them we are to make melody in our hearts.

It is a matter of very serious grievance, with many pious people, that any should be called to this solemn part of divine service who are not, in the eyes of Christian charity, really pious persons. To have it otherwise, is, we must confess, very nearly allied to the practice of engaging impenitent, perhaps immoral men, to lead our devotions in social or public prayer. Without stopping, however, to express an opinion on this particular point, we are very safe in saying, *and, doubtless, may say,* with the full approbation *of every Christian reader, that* unfeigned gravity, and profound

reverence, and an undoubted devotional deportment, become all those who bear so important and solemn a part in the worship of the Sanctuary. Next to the minister, the singers stand responsible to sustain the honor and sacred dignity of the house.

I need not say, then, how unbecoming, how entirely misplaced, how revolting to every pious feeling, is all levity, or marked inattention, or unbecoming deportment of any kind, in one that holds this relation to a worshipping assembly. Singers are the conductors and organs of a most solemn part of divine service, and when they exhibit a corresponding deportment, it adds much to the sacredness and solemnity of the occasion.

4. *How is the Sanctuary profaned?*

How has it come to pass that the place of public worship has, to an alarming extent, ceased to be regarded with that pious awe that it was in the days of our fathers? It is now too much like any other building—common and unclean. And no one can mistake the *influence* of the existing state of things.

But you may be sure there is some sufficient cause, when a house of religious worship is scarcely esteemed more sacred than any secular building. The instinctive feeling of reverence for the Sanctuary can be overcome only by the habit of seeing it often perverted. Let the rising generation see the church used for the purposes of secular business, for pleasure or amusement, or for anything short of a decidedly religious purpose, and they will soon cease to venerate it. And when they shall rise up to take the place of their fathers, they will no more honor, as they once did, the place where prayer was wont to be made.

It ought to grieve the heart of every good man to have his church used for any purpose that is not decidedly religious. It is always undesirable, and should be avoided, if possible.

The sacred character of the house of God is lowered down—the place is profaned—by meetings for business, for common instruction, or entertainment.

We lose the idea of its sanctity when we indulge in a careless way of entering, or assume an irreverent posture, or allow ourselves in the habit of inattention to the services. We lose our reverence for the place when we see others, especially if they be professors of religion, or only our seniors, transacting some trifling business, or engaged in worldly conversation, or in any way seeking their own pleasure in the Sanctuary. And if this be on the Sabbath, the effect is yet more disastrous.

It is, on this account, if on no other, exceedingly desirable that

all such as do not return to their homes during the interval of divine worship, should be employed in a way that should altogether sustain the character of the house. If they are seen by those who do not regard holy things, if seen by children and youth—by the children of the Sabbath school, who are themselves being taught the oracles of truth—if seen conversing on the common topics of the day, or whiling away an hour irksomely, will it not give an impression to the young mind that there is nothing, after all, very sacred in religious things; nothing in the Sanctuary more than in any other place that commands a sacred respect; and nothing in the feelings and conduct of them who profess godliness that makes any radical difference between them and the men of the world? Bible classes, or small associations for mutual instruction in the Word of God, or prayer meetings, perhaps, afford the most suitable mode of spending the intermission that is practicable.

Aside from the good a church may gain to themselves by a proper attention to this subject, they would make a lasting and profitable impression on the mind of the rising generation, that would do more to bring them in contact with the truth than any one thing. It would secure their attention while in the Sanctuary.

If there be not an immediate attention to this subject—if reverence to the house of God be not restored to its former regard—it needs not a prophetic eye to foresee that scarcely a generation will pass before the honor of God's house will be prostrate.

How much reverence have the younger branches of your congregation now for the house of God, or, to come yet nearer home, how much regard for the Sanctuary have the younger branches of the *church?* They, I mean, who have, by the holy seal, been made, in an important sense, members of the same household? Do they—your children—so regard the place of the divine presence as to give you a comfortable warrant that they will soon yield themselves up in love and obedience to the God of the upper Sanctuary? If so, let me beseech you to retrace the steps by which you have led them, and stop and weep where you have, in any degree, contributed to rob the place of sacred instructions of its holy dignity, and, consequently, those who should, above all others, be profited by them, of their restraining and sanctifying influences.

If you see children and youth careless and indifferent, noisy and inattentive; if you see them paying little or no deference to the place, or to the services of the Sanctuary, you are in little danger of misjudging if you suppose there must have, somewhere, been *some gross defection* in the example they have had before

them. Many things contribute to this melancholy result, some of which have been named. I shall name but one or two others.

And the first is, the practice of *separating families* at church. The parents, and the older or more sober children, are generally seated in the pew below, while the younger part of the household —at least, the more thoughtless—are allowed to choose their own companions, and sit where they please in the *gallery*. This practice need only be named, and every one instantly sees how injurious to the peace and comfort of the minister and to the worshipping assembly, how injurious to themselves, and how derogatory to a place of worship, are its consequences.

Nothing but stern necessity should ever induce a family to be thus divided; and in case of such a necessity, those members only who have sufficient maturity of character and sobriety that they may withstand the temptations which are, in most churches, incident to a seat in the gallery, should, by all means, be selected for that part of the house, while those who so much require the constant vigilance of parents or guardians, should be where they may have it. Were an audience to sit by *families*, both above and below, it would do very much, in the first place, to preserve the good order and solemnity of the house, and do more, in the second place, to secure an attentive hearing to the word preached, and a devout regard of the services.

There is, too, a suitableness; it is altogether becoming that parents and children, and, as far as possible, the whole household, should be seated together. It is an agreeable association, and not without a substantial benefit; for your religious profession is by *households*, many of your duties are duties of households, and as households your minister must often address you. How pleasant, then, how becoming, how profitable to be represented in the house of God as you really are in this life, and as you wish to be in heaven.

A moment's reflection will convince any one that no inconsiderable share of the evils from which few churches are exempt, is attributable to this cause.

The other cause which I would name, as being also a fruitful source of the evil in question, *is the habit of attending any place of worship, or no place*, just as inclination, or fancy, or some trivial circumstance dictates. In all societies where there are different denominations of worshippers, and, consequently, where almost every individual may choose to what house of worship he will go, it is not uncommon to find many who never seem to have had any opinions or to have formed any habits with regard to the place *and manner of* their worship. Hence they float on the surface,

and find anchorage nowhere. They are equally strangers, *to see* and *be seen*, wherever they go. They are in the worst possible state to be savingly or even intellectually benefited by the instructions and services of the Sanctuary; for they do not go to *hear*, but to *judge*—not to worship, but *to see others worship*—not to learn what God is, and what he requires, and to look into their own hearts and learn what they are—but they go to learn what different denominations are—what *they* do, and how they differ one from the other. Such must not expect to be benefited; for they do not go for benefit, but for curiosity. Would they choose out some one place of worship and make that their *home*, even were that the less perfect one, they would find it to be for their great gain.

If from necessity, however, or from conscientious scruples, one becomes, temporarily, the attendant at another place of worship, the case is essentially changed. The motive is altogether different, and consequently the act is different.

But what shall we say of the thoughtless indulgence of some parents, even Christian parents, in allowing their children to go, as a mere matter of curiosity, from one place of worship to another, not that they may be better instructed in the truth, but that they may *see what is going on*—that they may see the show; for they do not suppose them old enough, or if old enough, not desirous to judge of those denominational differences that induce different portions of the church to worship (as to form) according to their own peculiar views of propriety. They cannot take a more effectual way to distract their minds, to turn them away from all truth, and to make religion seem to consist in mere rites and forms.

Go where you will, and you will find that the sacredness of the Sanctuary was never promoted, nay, that it has always been sadly impaired, by the whole class of *curious* hearers—by them of itching ears—by all those children and youth who, more than for any other reason, wander from church to church that they may break away from parental restraint, and enter into other folds to disturb the flock.

5. *How may the sacredness of the Sanctuary be preserved, or recovered when lost?*

On this head I may not enlarge—it is needless. Remove the causes and the evil will disappear. When in the house of God, demean yourself as if you realized that you were indeed in the presence of the heart-searching God. Be grave, solemn, attentive, prayerful. Never, for a moment, feel yourself to be a spectator. No one *can be more interested* than you. Go to the Sanctuary

for no other purposes than those for which its services are appointed. Go to learn the great lesson of self-knowledge, of divine knowledge—of your future and eternal destiny, of the way of escaping eternal ruin, and of attaining to all the glories of the upper world. Let truths like these fill the mind of every one that crosses the threshold of the house of God, and there will be no further need of homilies on the best mode of preserving its sacredness.

Let the Sanctuary be preserved inviolate, as I have said; let it be a place exclusively devoted to the service of the Triune God; let no pains be spared to impress the mind of the coming generation, as they rise up about you, with an idea of the sacredness of its character; let it never be made a place where you may go to gratify a vain curiosity, or to be entertained or amused with those minor differences, as to form, or even as to doctrine, that may obtain in different houses of worship; and then will the Sanctuary be regarded, as it should be, holy unto the Lord—as the dwelling-place of the Most High, where he will deign to meet and bless a waiting people.

We cannot too highly estimate the worth of a well-ordered Sanctuary. There is not a more dismal sign of the present times, than the comparatively low estimation in which the house of God is held. The old-fashioned idea that it is a *holy* place, and that all who enter it must be serious, solemn, and attentive, is too much done away. I would not be superstitious, but I would have thrown about the place where prayer is wont to be made, something so impressive and solemnizing, that the careless child of mammon should there be made afraid, and be compelled to say, "How dreadful is this place!"

This is the place where God's people have always delighted to be. "I was glad," said an ancient saint, "when they said unto me, let us go into the house of the Lord." "How amiable are thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts! My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth for the courts of the Lord." "A day in thy courts is better than a thousand." "Blessed are they that dwell in thy house: they will be still praising thee." "Blessed is the man whom thou choosest and causest to approach unto thee, that he may dwell in thy courts: we shall be satisfied with the goodness of thy house, even of thy holy temple."

"Keep thy foot, therefore, when thou goest to the house of God, and be more ready to hear than to give the sacrifice of fools."

May our delight always be in the place where God's honor dwelleth. And with a suitable apprehension of his awful presence and his adorable excellence, may the language of our hearts be, *How awful is this place!*

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BY REV. ROYAL ROBBINS, Berlin, Conn.

THE SPIRIT OF THE BIBLE.

Ps. cxix. 156.—*Quicken me according to thy judgments.*

The Psalm from which this passage is selected, besides its numerous particular instructions, is not incorrectly viewed, also, in its general tone, as a *test of Christian feeling and experience.* Here, the established believer meets with almost every thing he has thought and felt respecting the Bible, and its message of God's mercy to this guilty world. The rich variety of his experience in this matter, is here exhibited with the utmost fidelity. He *knows* that the spirit which dictated these warm expressions of regard for the Sacred Volume, and these delineations of its effects, is a searcher of his own spirit, and congenial to it. Whatever is unlike it, he is assured is unholy and unchristian.

The Psalmist, after acknowledging the greatness of the Lord's tender mercies, entreats that he may be quickened according to the divine judgments, that is to say, agreeably to God's message in his written word. The terms judgments, statutes, testimonies, and the like, in the present Psalm, designate, as you are aware, the Sacred Scriptures, so far as they were then communicated. This quickening *according* to the judgments or the word of God, I consider the same thing as *having the spirit of the Bible within us.* In agreement with the sentiment thus suggested by the text, at least in the way of accommodation, the following hints are thrown

out, in the hope that the Divine Sanctifier will make the needful application to your hearts. Let, then, the thought be prominently brought into view—that it is all-indispensable the spirit of the Bible should be infused into every soul.

Let it, in the *first* place, be briefly inquired, what is that spirit.

The spirit of the Bible is its moral peculiarity—is the temper and feeling which it breathes, and with which it imbues the mind that receives it. This, indeed, would present a wide field of remark, as it is nothing less than the whole of experimental religion. But it is designed here to touch only on a few leading thoughts.

First, the spirit of the Bible is a spirit of *truth*. It is marked, in every part of it, by the veracity of Him who dictated its contents. It teaches truth, and truth only, and that of the highest concernment to the children of men; so that whatever is revealed in the Sacred Volume may be entirely depended on, and indeed demands unhesitating belief. But its spirit is that of truth, not only as teaching truth, but as inspiring a *love* of it. For to him who obtains his religious views from the Bible, there is the operation almost of a charm in the communications of that book. Nothing seems to him so sure and so conformed to the reality of things, as those communications; and he recurs to them at times with intense delight. Nothing seems to him more desirable than truth, and such truth, and he is made indeed to love it wherever he traces any vestiges of it. He is in search of this more than the philosopher's stone, whatever field of inquiry he surveys—whether the heavens or the earth—whether creation, providence, or grace. A great American scholar and philosopher, who lately deceased among us, is said to have uttered *truth*, *truth*, *truth*, as the last words which he spoke. It may well be the motto of every one, and that in a higher sense, perhaps, than was intended by the person alluded to. The Bible especially inspires a noble love of truth, and lights up the unquenchable flame of religious investigation in every bosom which is imbued with its influence.

The spirit of the Bible is also a spirit of *love*. It breathes the benevolence of its author in every page. It exhibits a love on the part of God our Savior, which is unparalleled in the history of the universe. And it is calculated to transmit this holy sentiment to the hearts of those whom it savingly benefits. Love becomes one of their chief characteristics—love to being in general, to all beings—to God first of all, and to his creatures, of whatever rank or degree of intelligence, for his sake. This is one of the most distinguishing characteristics of Bible Christians. In their case, the native character of enmity and selfishness is changed, and the beauty of disinterested, impartial love shines in their disposition and

conduct. The Bible teaches and inspires the love of complacency towards all holy beings, and fills the hearts of Christians with good-will towards every rational creature, whether good or evil. In respect to our fellow-men, in particular, it inculcates a broad and effective philanthropy. None among them are so degraded, vicious, or unworthy, as not to become the objects of that benevolence with which the Bible imbues the soul. White or colored, the freeman or the slave, civilized or savage, rich or poor—all come under the law of love, as the Christian reads his Bible, and as it leads him to practice. That message of God's mercy, wherever it is welcomed, tends utterly to banish the malignant and selfish passions, and to implant the kind, gentle, and social virtues in their room.

The spirit of the Bible is likewise that of *purity*. By this quality all its communications are distinguished, and its unvarying aim is to produce a morally upright state of the soul in every person who is brought within its influence. It is God's chief instrument in effecting moral changes among sinners, and in adorning them with the beauties of holiness. "The commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes." All the exhibitions and precepts of the divine word are stamped by holiness. They are holy in their nature and in their tendency. The Bible inculcates nothing wrong, either in essence or in form. No incorrect principle—no unsafe rule of life, was ever legitimately derived from that book. Nothing there contaminates and debases the mind, but every thing is adapted to purify and elevate it. Every thing there breathes of purity. The law is pure—the gospel is pure. Right motives of conduct are enjoined. Holy objects of pursuit are placed before the mind. Every divine communication is designed to inspire purity within. When the word is learned and received in some measure as it should be, it imparts a love of purity, and produces actual purity of thought, conversation, and conduct. It is, in fine, the great means which the Spirit of God employs in preparing sinners for that blessedness which is pronounced upon the pure in heart, and which is impliedly promised to those who follow holiness, namely, that they shall see God.

The spirit of the Bible is moreover that of *humility*. That sense of guilt and unworthiness—that low opinion of our own merits and attainments—that esteeming of others as better than ourselves, which characterizes the children of God, is emphatically the scriptural temper. It is a moral peculiarity which strikes every one who becomes acquainted with the Bible and the system of religion which it teaches. It is a temper unknown to the world, and indeed directly opposed to the feelings of worldly men. A haughty, self-sufficient, independent disposition, is more commonly that of unrenewed man. He has no proper sense of his demerit as a sinner,

and does not seem to understand his assigned place before God or his fellow-creatures. *They* have conversed with the word of God in vain, who have not been taught this cardinal virtue. Its whole plan of salvation, as well as its individual precepts, are designed to abase the proud heart, to strip the sinner of every plea of self-preference—of every claim to good, except in the sovereign mercy of God through Jesus Christ. And its action on minds already renewed, prepares them continually to mortify the appetite for worldly great things and consideration among men. The good servant of God, who was in the habit of stopping his ears, that he might not hear the commendations which were bestowed upon his public performances, is only an example of a more palpable form in which this temper is expressed. Pagan antiquity was so ignorant of this characteristic of a truly excellent nature, that it had no name to designate it. The humility of the cultivated Greek and Roman was meanness of spirit. But in the nomenclature of Christianity it is the only moral worth.

The spirit of the Bible is furthermore a spirit of *filial confidence*. It teaches the obligation of faith and dependence on God, as no other book does; points to doctrines that must be believed, and a Savior who must be confided in—a Savior who is the only sufficient and all-sufficient object of human hope, and shows by examples the power of this principle in the heart, in its triumph over moral and physical evil. They who obtain and manifest the spirit of the Bible, are men of faith. They trust in God—they trust in Christ, as the only rock of safety, as the only refuge of lost sinners. Their reliance on him is the reliance of children, and it leads them to adopt the filial prayer of "Abba Father." They cultivate this grace as peculiarly becoming those who are "bought with a price," and who expect a glorious inheritance of immortality. If "the evil days" are arrived, if trials thicken, if events take place differently from what was to be hoped, still they trust in God, believing that all occurrences are at his control, that the hearts of men are swayed by his influence, and that he will fulfil his own good, though inscrutable, purposes, through every scene of confusion, darkness, disappointment, and sin, in this world. In the event of death, they carry the temper of the Bible with them, meekly and confidingly, though it may be with much anguish of body, resigning their spirits into the hands of Jesus, and humbly hoping to be received and remembered in his kingdom.

In *public* trials, they who have been taught of God in his word, carry the same confidence with them. It may not be seen, at first, in what manner evil can be averted. Indeed it is not known but that it is best that the evil feared should be inflicted. The chastisement may be needed. The work of God, perhaps, will not be revived without it—certainly not

without the humiliation which divine inflictions are designed to produce. Still they whose temper is framed after the scriptural model, will trust in God that deliverance shall be accomplished, if to him it seems best. They will not prematurely despair, repine, and give up all exertion. If no human arm or wisdom can effect the salvation of a community, they doubt not that God, in his might and mercy, can do it.

The spirit of the Bible, in addition to all the above, is that of *obedience.* Such a disposition is found in all whom it has savingly enlightened and impressed. To do what God has bidden, and to refrain from doing what he has prohibited, constitutes the peculiar character and life of piety. An obedient temper is the prominent trait in every renewed mind. It is the ultimate and crowning excellence and test of religion. We may appeal to that in order to know whether we are Christians or not, when every other criterion has been applied and left us in uncertainty. It comes, then, to be a question of fact—of actual occurrence. We may take, as the matter of our judgments, that which is palpable and immediately obvious to the senses or to the mind. What is the manner of life? What is the course of conduct? What are the daily habits of feeling and performance in regard to the truths and precepts of Scripture? Is there a coincidence between the one and the other? The true believer's plan of life always includes universal compliance with the commands and will of God. That is a settled purpose, from which he does not habitually and knowingly deviate. And it is obedience within as well as without. It is the rule of the disposition and of the heart, as well as of the overt acts. They who are not willing to obey God in his word, and are inclined to make excuses for sloth and inaction—who prevailingly omit duty and seek to extenuate their faults, and especially who feel that they may occasionally venture on an act of transgression, however slight, are far, very far, from having the spirit of the Bible wrought in them. They manifest that they know as yet nothing as they ought to know—that they have come in contact with the word to little purpose, if they have not learned the great point on which it insists; or if, having learned it, they refuse compliance.

Such, in a few particulars, concisely stated, is the spirit of the Bible. As we may well wish to know how it may be transferred to ourselves, a direction or two will here be given.

This temper may be acquired, first, by *frequent reading and meditation of the Scriptures.* A practice of this kind is essential in order to realize so happy a result. It is the same here as in other subjects of investigation. Diligence and assiduity are to be applied to the sacred volume. It is to be much read and meditated upon. It is to be made a study, with such powers and means and opportunities as you possess. How can

you understand it unless you investigate it? and how can you imbibe its spirit and the feelings it is adapted to impart, unless you understand it—understand it in some good degree? The more it is studied and understood, the more will you feel its influence, other things being equal. Persons distinguished for piety have been distinguished for their acquaintance with the Bible. It is a book which they have loved daily and frequently to read—to which they have resorted more than to any other for light, consolation, and heavenly wisdom, and on which their habitual thoughts and meditations have been employed—often their best powers of comparison and analysis been expended. It is quite natural to think that the man, as accounts state, who was in the habit of reading his Bible through once every month, must have loved it in no ordinary degree, and deeply drank of its spirit. Although I here speak of an attention to the inspired volume chiefly for devotional purposes, yet the scope of these remarks may include also a methodical and critical study of it.

Again—the spirit of the Bible is acquired by means of *true-hearted prayer*. This must be added to the reading and study of the word. Such an exercise indicates the temper which is suitable in learning or interpreting the sacred oracles. It is connected with a disposition essential to a profitable attention to the Bible. Fervent prayer also betokens the sincere desires of the mind, and called forth by such an interest as God's precious truth, it will not fail to enlist those energies which may be demanded for the purpose in view. It moreover secures the assistance of the Holy Spirit to render the word plain, and to impress its communications on the mind. "But ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things"—a declaration which, as applied to believers now, may lead them to expect, from such an influence, an adequate acquaintance with divine truth. With the Spirit's guidance, obtained through prayer, none will essentially err, or "stumble at the word, being disobedient." Light, and glory, and beauty from the word, will follow in the wake of prayer.

Again—you acquire the spirit of the Bible by *practising according to its rule*, so far as you know it—so far as you are enlightened. This will be, of course, in successive measures. "Then shall we know, if we follow on to know the Lord." "For whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance." God gives us his grace in proportion as his communications are practically regarded. That is a law of his spiritual kingdom. Let a person live according to the light he has derived from the Bible, and he shall have increased light. His spirit will become more and more in accordance with the divine rule. The truth, purity, love, humility, faith, and obedience, which have been spoken of, will be more completely diffused through all his moral nature.

Furthermore, the spirit of the Bible will be obtained by *feeling our indebtedness to God and dependence on his Spirit for the gift.* Certainly it will not be obtained without such a reference. In such a concern, we are not permitted to trust in our own independent efforts, or to ascribe our spiritual acquisitions to any thing short of the divine assistance. Here our own strength is weakness—our own light is darkness. We are indebted to God for all that is right in us, as it is the production of his Holy Spirit. To God, therefore, we should feel our obligations, and on his Spirit should we continually depend, and then the grace of salvation will abundantly flow into our souls. Then shall we consistently bear about with us the temper of God's word, and it will, as it were, shine in our very countenances.

Now, in respect to the importance of being imbued with this temper, the following illustrations and arguments may be urged. Every child of God should fervently plead, "Quicken me according to thy judgments," the communications of the inspired book. It deserves every consistent, strenuous effort, to be quickened, made alive, animated, revived in religion, by such an influence—to show the piety of the Bible in our own hearts and lives.

1. This scriptural activity constitutes *true nobility of soul.* The Bereans, as we are taught on one occasion, "were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the Scriptures daily whether those things" which they heard from the apostles accorded with that standard. Thus they felt the holy energy of divine truth filling and stirring their minds. It endowed them with true nobility of soul. That spirit which was thus produced, and thus efficient, is a great, a noble spirit. The Bible elevates the thoughts and views of men—raises their affections into the purer regions of invisible realities, and sets them on the pursuit of "glory, and honor, and immortality." A mind penetrated with the truths of revelation cannot be chained to this world and its fading interests—it cannot grovel in sensuality and sin. It feels that it was made to rise above the low cares and vanities of life, and to hold communion with God and with heaven. This elevation of the mind is, of course, incompatible with covetousness and every idolatrous affection; and while diligence in the prosecution of common and necessary secular objects is employed, the soul is fervent, serving the Lord. The difference which scriptural truth makes in mankind, in respect both to their intellect and their hearts, is no less surprising than true. It refines and expands, and ennobles the soul, by many perceptible degrees, above that state in which it was uninfluenced by divine considerations. How important then is the infusion of a Bible spirit in the human mind,

which is so accountable to God for its spiritual elevation in this world and above it!

2. You will *think and decide correctly on moral and religious subjects*, provided you are imbued with the spirit of God's book. The great reason why there are so many wrong judgments and decisions on moral and divine truths—so many religious controversies and altercations, is, that there obtains so deplorable a destitution of the temper of the Bible among men. Many will depart from the right and the true on these subjects, because the tone and temper of that book are unknown to their experience. They will not be controlled by its decisions—they will not yield to its claims, and this because they have not that spiritual understanding and that sanctified taste which enable the mind to see and approve that which is morally excellent. How seldom does a Bible Christian—a man who wears the impress of the Bible on his heart—whose soul is enlightened by its light, and the whole or the greater part of whose religious views have been derived from the sacred volume—err from a straight course, or fall into obvious mistakes. If we decide by the light of Scripture, we decide aright. No one's soul can be greatly jeoparded by any speculative error, when he manifests and acts out the temper inspired by that book, since in this case it can be an error only on subordinate topics, or of philosophical explanations.

3. Your *feelings will be composed and tranquil*—there will be *peace within*—when you are quickened according to the divine statutes. When your hearts are shaped by the Bible, and filled with its light and love, they are prepared for consolation. Your fears are then removed, your agitations soothed, your hopes brightened. In proportion to your heavenly feelings will be the tranquillity of your minds. God will be rejoiced in —his service will yield a divine satisfaction. The terrors of hell—a servile dread—will die away, and you will be allured to duty rather by joy than impelled to it by a tormenting conscience. It is only unfaithfulness to God and to the Bible, in any part of our walk as Christians, that necessarily straitens and depresses the soul. Right feelings and activity in duty make room for peace. The consciousness of following the divine rule, and of always having a disposition to follow it, must have a direct and strong tendency to inspire a sweet serenity of mind.

4. Such a participation of the spirit of the Bible as has been described, *prepares us for every demanded religious service*. It is the very temper, with which to go forth to our duties—our great works as Christians. It prepares us to engage in them with alacrity, with vigor, and with effect. Having learned of Christ, we know, in some degree, what is required of us, and how to engage in the divine work acceptably. A willing, subdued

heart, feeling the sanctifying influence of the gospel, is ready for any service to which it is called. It is indeed the only qualification for it, as a contrary state of the affections must be connected with aversion to duty. A man uninfluenced, unaffected with the motives of God's revealed truth, is in a very unfit condition of mind for any labors and sacrifices in the cause of God. But let these motives be felt with their appropriate force, and it constitutes the very aliment of the soul to do the divine will.

5. Your *influence for good in the world* depends on the degree in which we are imbued with the spirit of the Bible. No man does good in the highest sense, unless he has a measure of this spirit. Every one must feel the effect of the sacred message on his own heart, before he can successfully recommend it to others. The truth, purity, love, humility, filial confidence, and obedience, which constitute the elements of scriptural piety, must be exhibited by those who would exert a useful influence on others—on an impenitent world. None but they who possess these and other characteristics of the gospel will study to do good—will be in the habit of devising ways and means of benefiting the souls of their fellow-men. It is the true spirit of the Bible alone that induces men to engage in the self-denying labors of benevolence. It is this temper which feeds the spring of so heavenly a charity. It is an influence of this kind which induces the philanthropist to seek out the causes of human wretchedness, and to spend his property or risk his life to remove them. It is this which inclines the converted, redeemed sinner, to meet the odium of the world, in attempts to turn his unconverted neighbors or companions from their sins and follies, and win them to Christ. It is this which sends the missionary of the cross to heathen barbarians, far from kindred and country, where he voluntarily exiles himself from the delights of refined and intelligent society, for the sake of saving the guilty souls of these his fellow-heirs to eternity. It is this temper of God's book, wrought into the soul, forming its very texture, that finds its only proper life in these beneficent labors. How unspeakably important, then, that it should be possessed by all who would, in the highest sense, be useful in such a world as this!

6. Your *meetness for death and the judgment*, depends on the fact of your being imbued with the spirit which has been described. The inspired book was given us in order that we might form our characters according to its precepts and rules. Until, therefore, you come under an habitual influence from it, you have not answered its principal purpose in relation to yourselves. You are without a meetness to undergo the change of death, and without a prospect of experiencing, under its agonies, that support which our sinking, frail nature then requires. You are without a preparation to enter into the world of spirits, and to appear before Christ

in judgment. The purifying efficacy of the truth by the Holy Spirit, is absolutely needful for all, in order to pass the scrutiny of the judgment uncondemned. To enjoy security at that fearful period, it must appear that we have profited by the Bible—that we have learned its vital truths —that we have practised its commands—that we have imbibed its peculiar genius. There is no way to be right with God, or to attain a new spiritual nature, except through the knowledge and influence of his word. As you would, then, be sustained in death—be approved in the judgment, and hear the cheering sentence of acquittal, and the joyful welcome to heaven, you will feel the necessity of realizing all the purifying effects of the scriptural message upon your hearts. You must not fail of being Christians, according to the full meaning of the term and of that book. To come short of this, is to be undone for ever.

Finally, your *present assurance of final acceptance* depends on the degree in which you are influenced by the spirit of the divine word. No one can feel within himself the evidence of the Savior's favor except as he is actuated and controlled by that spirit. Without it, he must have an internal demonstration that he is in the wrong, and he can feel no authorized assurance that he will meet with the mercy of the Judge. He cannot have a solid basis of piety in his own view; and whatever hopes he may conceive at times, his heart will be extremely apt to fail him in the hour of trial, as many have then been cut off from every ray of comfort. The only proper persuasion, therefore, of final acceptance, rests on the reality and extent of that grace which the Bible has been the means of producing in a sinner's mind. This is the witness in one's self, and is the true measure of a believer's enjoyment. In proportion as he feels it, will he gladly anticipate the scenes which are before him in the endless duration of the future world. All this blessedness, as he enters upon it, he will for ever ascribe to the grace of Jesus, as manifested in and through his word.

Let, then, proper views be entertained respecting the Christian Scriptures—those writings which are the medium of so much good, and fraught with the best hopes of time and eternity. Let proper views be entertained of the system of religion which they disclose and urge on the acceptance of mankind. In comparison with this system, as some one has remarked, the created universe is but a bauble. Let suitable efforts be made to spread abroad the knowledge of this religion among the perishing portions of mankind. O let the Bible, with its precious truths and its glorious Savior, and its thrilling motives, and its heavenly spirit, be given to them, and *soon* given to them all! Why should they, for whom Christ died equally as for us, be left to perish? Dr. Philip, a

missionary to South Africa, once disputing with an infidel, was told by the latter that he did not believe the doctrine which he himself preached: "You professors of Christianity," said the infidel, "do not believe what you profess." "What do you mean?" said Dr. Philip. The sceptic replied, "if *I* believed that God had given his Son to die for a wretched world, and that, in order to our salvation, it was necessary that this truth should be known, I would go round the world to tell it." By the way, what a rebuke is this to many professed Christians, who are so far from going, or being willing to go, round the world, to proclaim the story of redemption, that they will not even assist those who desire to do this deed of mercy. But the infidel might be told that this is what the missionaries of the cross are now attempting to do, and what they who liberally support them are attempting to do, through their hands; since it is a correct maxim in morals, as in law, that the thing we do by another, we do ourselves. They are endeavoring to send the Bible and its religion to the ends of the earth. This is a work which is due from who possess the Bible, and which will be felt to be important in proportion as that book is appreciated, and its spirit rules in the heart. In regard to the sceptic, above alluded to, it is not difficult to believe, that with such a temperament, in the event of conversion, he would have attempted to verify his own declaration; although the majority of men feel, on this subject, more in the indolent spirit of another infidel, who remarked, that if Christianity were true, "it ought to be written on the skies, so that every one might know it." Written on the skies! It is far more clearly and certainly imprinted in the soul of the renewed sinner.

Although I have all along spoken of the truth of God as delivered in his word, and the heavenly mould in which it casts the heart, yet it will be conceded that his message in his providence is also important. It becomes us ever to regard it, for his providence always harmonizes with his word. We can learn from his actual dispensations much that is most valuable, and conducive to our spiritual benefit. It is well for us to observe the providence of God; for they who observe providences, as it is said, shall have providences to observe. And it is wonderful how events, in an unexpected manner, sometimes conspire to effect those purposes that are consentaneous to God's revealed truth. Good comes out of evil; and the time when men almost despair, is that which God takes to vindicate and advance most efficaciously his own cause. But it is often through a series of trials and perplexities, that he puts his people on the highway of spiritual prosperity. Baffled and defeated, and even hope failing, in regard to favorite plans, or astounded and subdued by afflictions, the church of God feels the necessity of referring her case simply

to him; and distrusting her own foresight and relying on his, she is carried forward with a degree of union to the one grand result of all the divine designs, namely, the glory of God in the salvation of a dying world.

Welcome, then, in some sense, are those severe providences—those messages of fearful note, which defeat our earthly hopes, and prostrate us as in the dust. And we may well pray to be quickened or revived according to the judgments of God, taking that word in the acceptation of divine inflictions. Interpreted by the Bible, they enforce the same lesson. Who, then, among us, exposed as we are to evil, will not meekly learn it? And shall not Christians pray that the hearts of sinners may be penetrated by the same means? Since these are dead in trespasses and sins, let the Spirit of God be implored, that through the word, confirmed by his providences, they may be raised to newness of life. It is not without this same blessed instrumentality, that we may hope they will be made anxiously to inquire for the way of salvation, and experience the reality of that great change. O cannot something more effectual be done on our part to establish the dominion of truth and heaven over the precious immortal souls of such as are now strangers to the spirit of God's word! Shall not the prayers of Christians wing that quickening message to their hearts?

SERMON CCLXIX.

BY REV. RUFUS W. BAILEY, North Carolina.

THE NATURE AND REASON OF THE CHRISTIAN'S HOPE.

1 PETER, III. 15.—*Be ready always to give an answer to every one that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear.*

TRUE Christians have a *hope* of salvation, and they have a *reason* for that hope. Let us inquire, then,

1. What is the Christian's *hope?*

2. What is the *reason* for that hope?

1st. What is the Christian's hope?

Hope is the desire of some attainment, attended with expectation, or a conviction that the object of desire is attainable. It is, therefore, an operation of the mind which involves the action of reason and judgment. It is a mental state in contrast with despair, where all expectation of success is extinguished. This is a general definition of hope, and thus far all hope is the same. But the *Christian's* hope is distinguished from all others by its *object* and *end.*

The *object* of the Christian's hope is *heaven*, as a state of holiness and communion with God. The Christian hopes that he shall dwell in heaven, that he shall be sinless, that he shall put off this flesh, with all temptations to sin, and shall live and reign with Christ in glory. The object of the Christian hope, then, is holiness, as a personal grace, and the glory of God, as the great object of all pious desire and effort.

The *end* or effect of this hope is the commencement, gradual progress, and vigorous growth of this personal holiness in the present life, and its perfection in heaven, to the glory of God in Jesus Christ, through whose work and intercession this end is accomplished.

This is the Christian hope, in its *nature*, *object*, and *end.* It is, in the heart, a desire for holiness, with an expectation of attaining it. This hope, then, belongs, in its nature, object and end, to every Christian. It must, therefore, be attended with a personal experience, which furnishes him with a *reason* for his hope.

2nd. What, then, is the *reason* of the Christian's hope?

Three specifications will develop a personal experience, not only amply sufficient to justify this hope, but, by a very natural and almost necessary process, originating and sustaining it.

1. He has felt himself to be a *lost sinner.* Christ came to seek and save them that were *lost.* Not against their *will*, but by their own consent, in full view of their actual situation. Therefore, in this plan, we see that provision is made for correcting and enlightening the mind, so

that it may be led to an intelligent choice. By a divine agency, the mind is enlightened to apprehend sin in its true nature and consequences, and to see clearly the most important and solemn relations of the sinner to God, as a lawgiver. Here the soul comes to the knowledge and conviction that it is *lost*—not as a matter of speculation, but of reality.

There are many orthodox sinners, who will readily admit the principles of the Christian religion, and will speculate themselves into hell with as little emotion as they will demonstrate a principle in geometry. I do not now refer to that class of persons, nor to another very numerous class, who are very much afraid they shall be lost, and under the influence of this selfish fear, have made a great many selfish efforts to save themselves, but who have, in all this, had no care for any body, nor any thing, except themselves. The law of God, its purity, strictness, and justice, they have never considered, nor are they at all concerned that it should be preserved untarnished, and therefore the peculiar plan of redemption, as revealed in the gospel, furnishes to their minds no distinct *reason* for a hope that sinners may be saved. Of course it furnishes no *personal hope* for them. But I refer to that class of persons who have felt that they are lost, absolutely lost, gone, ruined, damned, under the broken law of God.

Did you ever feel that you were lost? Do you know the gloominess, anxiety, perplexity, terror, consternation, amazement, of being lost in a trackless wood? Have you, in that state of agitation, seen the night shut in, the stars expire, the heavens blackened with clouds, as if hung for your funeral? Have you felt the chill of the night air come over you, and heard no answer to your anxious call for help? Have you heard the yell of the wild beast, snuffing the scent of your track, and the tread of his rapid step hastening to his prey? Have you *ever felt*, under any circumstances, the conviction in full possession of your souls that you were *lost?* Then, in that conviction, you have had an illustration of the experience of the sinner brought to a knowledge of his true condition under the law. Whatever may have been your precise condition, the operations of the mind in this part of its experience are the same, the effects on the feelings and efforts are the same, all is the same, except the intelligent conviction of the different consequences which follow in the one case and in the other. It is a sense of personal danger, awakening fear, urging to effort, and sometimes ending in despair. You have often heard the story of the child in the woods, who had strayed from his path, and was found in the depth of the forest, bereft of his reason, treading, with a rapid step and vacant eye, a little circle, wringing his hands, and crying, lost, *lost*, LOST! This idea had taken entire possession of his mind, and, without making any efforts to escape, he dwells in despair on one single idea, expressed in one doleful monosyllable, lost, *lost*, LOST.

If I could open to your view the dark caverns of hell, and show you the spirits of sinners there, brought to the solemn reality of their moral ruin, this one idea would stand out on its walls, and speak in every form and feature of its miserable tenants—Lost, lost, lost.

This is the first real conviction of the sinner under the law. And until he is brought to this reality, he never will make an effort to any

effect. We may brandish the sword of the spirit, naked and polished. He will wink away the force of its brightness, and say—*surely it is the hand of a man.* We may sound in his ear that terrible idea in that terrible word lost, lost, lost, until he trembles. But he will soon recover his equanimity again, and say—*surely it is the voice of a man.* Never will he do any thing in earnest until he is convinced by the demonstration of the Spirit and of power that *he is lost.* This, therefore, is a necessary part of the experience of a true Christian, and it is the first step in his experience.

2. He feels that he has fled to Christ for salvation. Suppose yourself, if you can, in the place of the lost traveller in a trackless desert, where your calls for help should be answered only by the tiger's yell. Suppose, when you were expecting to feel that tiger's leap, an accent of mercy should revive your hope of salvation, and the warm hand of a fellow-man should embrace you and invite you to flee the impending dangers. You would return that embrace; you would commit yourself to that man with confidence that under *such* circumstances he was sincere and true. Your heart would flow with gratitude, and you would hail and love him as your benefactor. Such is Christ to the lost sinner. He is a Savior, and is embraced, and loved, and honored as such.

When the sinner comes to a knowledge of his hopeless ruin under the law, then the salvation of the gospel is approved as precisely adapted to his case. He can then believe, he trusts, and in the exercise of that trust, ripened by a divine influence to a sanctifying *faith*, Christ becomes to him the end of the law for righteousness. He is saved by Christ. Here his experience has been so impressive, so deep-wrought, so *thorough*, that it is abiding, and works by love, purifies the heart, overcomes the world, and brings forth good fruits. He cannot forget it. Can the man who has been lost and saved, forget his benefactor while he lives? No. Every thing reminds him of that benefactor. His hopes, his fears, his enjoyments, his dangers and sufferings, all awaken grateful recollections. Here is a force of experience adequate to the formation of principles, that shall influence and regulate the conduct through life. And it does so.

3. The true Christian finds a third reason to encourage a hope that he is personally interested in the gospel plan of salvation in the *effects of this faith on his life.* By a divine constitution, true faith in Christ is made to work by love, to purify the heart, and to bring forth good fruits. This is not a mere contingent circumstance of faith; *it is a part* of gospel faith, of the faith of the true Christian, and is the characteristic which distinguishes him from the devils and from wicked men. It is operative to produce infallibly in the soul certain affections, which are the abiding principles of its action.

Here, then, the duty of self-examination will find its principal materials for thought. Without a reformed life, proceeding from the love of holiness, every other evidence of Christian character is invalidated. Here must be hatred of sin, *as sin*, which will lead to its abhorrence in every form, and a love of holiness as such, which will ensure the uniform and unwavering pursuit of it. Hence there will result an untiring effort to avoid temptation, and to live in communion with God. Here must be

also an abiding love to Christians as such, and to all the precious interests of the church on earth. Here must be a supreme love to God, and a devotion of all we have and are to him. Here are principles which are operative, and adequate to reform the life and fit the soul for heaven.

The man who will perform religious duty only through respect to public sentiment, only to preserve his character, is entirely a worldly man. He who finds a relish in the pleasures and company of worldly men, which leads him to conform to their fashions and practices so far as he can without losing his standing in the church, is at heart a worldly man. He who, to save appearances, will abstain from indulgences in public, which he will cherish with warm and hearty gust in private, is strictly a sensual man. He who will not habitually bear himself in his own presence, and in the presence of God, with the same uprightness as before men, who does not fear the upbraiding of his own conscience more than the public brand, who is not an honest man in his own heart, is a heartless man; and if he be in the church he is a heartless hypocrite.

The true Christian is such by a living principle of action incorporated by a divine energy with the immortal spirit of every renewed sinner. It lives in the life of the soul, and burns as well amid polar ices as under a tropical sun, unchanged by the influence of other changes, inextinguishable even with life. In the bosom of the slave, the beggar, and the prince, it is identical. It bears the changes of prosperity and adversity, and is still the same. Place a true Christian on a desolate island, and he will be still a worshipper of God. *That* will be a place of prayer. Give him a solitary residence through eternity in any part of the universe, and *there* will be a soul happy and bright in its own glow of devotion, its fires of love.

The *reason*, then, of the Christian's hope stands first, on the clear proof which this faith furnishes of the true religion, established by prophecy and miracle, and adapted to the sinner's wants, actually effecting the moral renovation which all others have failed to do, and gaining brightness and strength amid the conflicts which have disproved and destroyed all other systems.

The *reason* for the *personal hope* which the Christian entertains, although it embraces many particulars, is here comprised in three specifications. He has known himself to be lost, has fled to Christ for salvation, and has actually found that a change of heart has resulted in a reformation of life. Brethren, have you *this hope?* and is this the *reason* of it? If not, *you* are still lost, *lost*, LOST.

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SERMON CCLXX.

BY REV. W. B. SPRAGUE, D. D.

I WOULD NOT LIVE ALWAY.

Job vii. 16.—*I would not live alway.*

It is, I suppose, universally admitted, that the love of life is natural to man; and there are certainly many things connected with the present state of existence to render life desirable. The world in which we dwell has been admirably fitted up for our convenience and comfort; and there are good gifts constantly coming down from the Father of mercies, to sustain and cheer us during our residence here. There are opportunities here for doing good; for administering relief to the needy and wretched; for aiding the cause of truth and piety; and thus glorifying God in our body and spirit. There are the means of working out our own salvation; of laying up treasure in heaven that will satisfy and endure; and even the afflictions of the present become a furnace in which the soul is prepared to shine with increasing beauty and brightness in the future. And there are some of the Christian graces, for the development of which this is the only theatre; for when injury ceases, there will be no occasion for forgiveness; and when suffering ceases, there will be no demand for patience. Indeed, there is good reason why every individual should be thankful for his present existence: even though he perverts it to his eternal ruin, yet the hours of life are golden hours; they are given to be a blessing, and praise is due to Him who bestows them.

There are reasons enough, then, why every good man should set a high value upon life. But there are reasons also why no good man could consistently desire to live alway. It is possible, indeed, that there may be, even in the true Christian, a criminal dissatisfaction with the world; a desire to die only because it is painful to live; and this spirit is certainly always to be condemned. It is not certain but that Job had a measure of this feeling when he made the declaration in our text. But there are other grounds on which the declaration MAY be made the Christian with perfect consistency. To exhibit these grounds is the design of the present discourse.

I say, then, the Christian does not desire to live alway, because he prefers,

Perfect light to comparative darkness:
Immaculate purity to partial sanctification:
Immortal strength to earthly weakness:
Cloudless serenity to agitating storms:
The fellowship of the glorified to the society of the imperfect:
The honors of victory to the perils of warfare.

I. The first reason why the Christian would not live alway, is HIS PREFERENCE OF PERFECT LIGHT TO COMPARATIVE DARKNESS.

I know, indeed, that when the old man is put off and the new man is put on, there is a sense in which the soul is brought out of darkness into marvellous light. The mind takes far more distinct and comprehensive views of divine truth than it ever did before; it has a spiritual discernment imparted to it, by means of which what had before seemed faint and shadowy, becomes substance and life. But even that marvellous light into which the new-born soul enters when he is delivered from the blindness of spiritual death is itself darkness, when compared with the radiant manifestations of Jehovah's glory in the upper world. Here the Christian, in his best state, sees through a glass darkly. How very little does he know of the plan of God's operations! How he is confounded at almost every step by the occurrence of events whose meaning he is utterly unable to explain! How many things, after his best efforts to comprehend them, he is obliged to resolve into God's mysterious and unfathomable sovereignty! And in his contemplations of God's truth, as it is revealed in his word, how frequently is he perplexed with doubt in respect to the actual meaning of the Spirit; and when he attempts to launch out at all beyond the Revelation, how quickly does he find himself sinking in a gulf of conjecture and uncertainty! How humbling to the pride of the intellect, how indicative of the narrowness of its conceptions, to find himself

obliged to receive different truths, which he knows must be consistent with each other, which yet he is perfectly inadequate to reconcile; to catch just an indistinct glance of some great field of truth, and then perhaps find his vision immediately obstructed by intervening clouds! But then how delightful the contrast when he reaches heaven; There, many a dark page in the history of God's dispensations on earth will be illumined by a clear and satisfying light. There he will know why he had anguish when he longed for rest; why his plans were defeated by which he would fain have glorified God; why Zion was left so long to mourn, and the chariot-wheels of her King were so slow in their approach, when God's people were upon their knees praying and watching for the dawn of a brighter day. And the mysteries of Redemption—oh, how they will unfold to his delighted eye; how the great and holy truths which he knew so imperfectly here will burst upon him in their full brightness, and in the harmony of perfect proportions! There, there will be no uncertainty, no confusion, no darkness at all. This seeing through a glass darkly is the business of earth; seeing face to face will be the business of heaven. There the vision will be perfect; and the Sun of the moral universe will shine with immortal splendor.

I bless God for all the light which he gives me now; but I would not live alway, because I have the assurance that a brighter light will shine hereafter. I love to bend over the mysteries of Providence and the mysteries of Redemption; and sometimes a field of glory opens suddenly upon me where thick darkness had always brooded before; but I own that I have my eye and my heart upon a world where I hope to live for ever amidst the brighter beams of immortal truth. I would not live alway, because I desire to get rid of this painful ignorance and doubt which now oppresses me; because I would fain behold my God as he is, and see light in his light.

II. The Christian does not desire to live alway, because HE PREFERS IMMACULATE PURITY TO PARTIAL SANCTIFICATION.

Time has been when he was dead in trespasses and sins; when he had no discernment of spiritual beauty, no relish for spiritual objects. But in the renovating change that has passed upon him, both his views and his tastes have been corrected. He regards sin now as the most abominable of all evils; as tending to the subversion of Jehovah's throne; as the deadly seed from which spring all the calamities of the world and all the horrors of hell. And yet this evil and bitter thing in a measure still adheres to him. It often withers his best joys. It throws a barrier between him and the throne of grace,

when his Saviour bids him come, and his heart would respond gratefully to the invitation. It makes duty a burden, and prosperity a curse. And though it does not prevail ALWAYS to the despoiling of his joys, and the obscuring of his graces; though there are times when his devout affections are brought into vigorous and delightful exercise, yet often, very often, has he occasion to exclaim, "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" And when this burden presses him down, is it not natural that he should desire to be free from it; and that he should look with grateful expectation towards heaven, as the only region of perfect purity? Into that immortal residence nothing can ever enter that defileth or maketh a lie. There is the infinitely holy God. There are the perfectly holy angels. There every heart beats, every faculty operates, every harp is strung, in subservience to great and holy ends. At the gate of that world, the Christian lays aside all that is earthly, and puts on the robes of perfect holiness; and henceforth, even the scrutinizing eye of the seraph cannot discern upon him the least vestige of the curse.

I would not live alway, because I would not always be half a sinner and half a saint. I hate this body of sin and death, and in God's best time I would be glad to throw it down. I long to be delivered from these wandering thoughts; from these expressions of devotion into which my cold and reluctant heart will not throw itself; from this feebleness and inconstancy of effort in doing the will of Him who hath died for me. I would be conversant only with holy objects; I would be the subject only of holy exercises; I would be engaged only in holy employments; and I would not live alway, because then this sweetest, noblest desire of my heart could never be fulfilled.

III. The Christian would not live alway, because HE PREFERS IMMORTAL STRENGTH TO EARTHLY WEAKNESS.

I will not speak of this body now as it came originally from its Creator's hands; then no doubt it was strong and glorious; for it was a part of that creation which the great Framer of the whole pronounced "very good." But ever since sin entered to blight the beauty of Jehovah's works, the human body has been characterized by a tendency to decay. Look at the man writhing in bodily anguish; bending under bodily decrepitude; fainting from bodily exhaustion; and say whether sin has not mixed up its poison in the very blood that courses through our veins? And if the body is weak, so is the mind also. It is conscious, indeed, of having within itself a principle of greatness. It is sometimes surprised by the exercise of its

own faculties; but after all, many of its operations are exceedingly feeble and unsatisfying. And there is a proportional weakness in human virtue; for how frequently is virtue conquered and carried away captive in the war with temptation!

Since then the Christian, while he remains here, is comparatively feeble in his whole nature, how reasonable that he should aspire to a state in which he shall exchange his present imbecility for enduring and ever-growing strength! At the threshold of heaven he will drop this crazy, corruptible, inglorious body, and ere long will receive in its place a body endued with undecaying vigor, and clothed with unfading beauty; a body which may mock at the power of death; and which can move as if upon the lightning to execute God's high commissions in other worlds. And the intellect—Oh, how IT will brighten and expand; how it will rise to that which is lofty, and sink into that which is profound, and never tire either in the sublimity of its excursions or the depth of its researches! And the moral faculties—with what incalculable energy will THEY operate, when God's Spirit has given them a perfect direction, and there is all the beauty and glory of the third heavens to call them into exercise! I ask again, is it not reasonable that the Christian should hail the day when he shall be taken up to that region of immortal strength?

I would not live alway, because I do not wish always to be an heir to these clustering infirmities of mortality. I would bear patiently the pains, the groans, the tossings, to which this poor body is subjected; but I would rather be beyond their reach, and wear a body that could bid defiance to disease; that could shine with an angel's beauty, and move with an angel's strength. I would not complain of the feebleness of my mental operations; and yet I would hail with gratitude the expansion of these powers into something yet greater and brighter: I would prefer the noble thoughts of glorified manhood, to the narrow conceptions of this infancy of my existence. I would be thankful for what God has made me; and humble for what I have made myself; but I would wait in exulting hope of a complete renovation of my nature, in which I shall have strength imparted to me to bear an eternal weight of glory.

IV. The Christian would not live alway, because HE PREFERS CLOUDLESS SERENITY TO AGITATING STORMS.

The natural world has ITS tempests; and sometimes they are so violent as well nigh to shake the earth. The thick cloud lowers; the thunders roar; the lightnings flash; the whirlwind rushes by; and man himself is obliged to look out for a refuge from the war of elements. But far more to be dreaded are the storms that agitate

the moral world; and no man lives, no man ever lived, a stranger to THEM. Oh, how they sport with human hopes! How they carry away every thing earthly that we value, leaving hardly a wreck behind! Here they take the form of disease, and in an hour change the most vigorous into the most helpless of mortals. There they come in the form of bereavement, and the result is that the sepulchre is open, and the funeral procession approaches it, and there is a corruptible deposite made there which some at least cannot think of without bleeding hearts. And again they take the form of animosities and contentions either in public or in private, in church or in state; and under their influence Friendship bleeds and Peace becomes an exile. Contemplate the condition of our own country at this moment, no matter whether in its civil or ecclesiastical interests; and then look abroad, and note the signs of convulsion and revolution that are exhibited by other countries; and you will surely see enough to convince the most incredulous that this world was destined to be anything else than a place of ultimate rest.

But in heaven there will be an uninterrupted and eternal tranquility. The Christian looks forward to it as a sanctuary, a refuge, which no storm that may rise either on earth or in hell can ever reach. If the history of that world, from the time that the morning stars began to sing, could be submitted to us, we should find the record of only a single storm; and that was instantly hushed, by a dislodgement of the rebels with whom it originated. No, there are no dying scenes to break the heart in heaven. There is no party spirit, no rivalry, no unhallowed strife, in heaven. The glorified who range its fields of light never feel the blighting hand of disease, or the blasting breath of slander, or the mildew of an envious and malignant spirit. Why then should not the Christian wish to breathe that peaceful atmosphere? Especially when he has grown tired and sick of the strifes of the world, and feels that there is nothing dear to him here, which the next tempest that sweeps over the earth may not sweep away; and at the same time lifts his eye towards a serener and brighter world, how reasonable that he should exclaim, "I would not live alway?"

I would not live alway, because I cannot bear the sound of dying groans; because I instinctively shrink back from the bedside where my beloved friend is going through with his last agonies. I would not live alway, because I choose stability rather than vicissitude; and even when my hopes of earthly good are the brightest, I never know but that it is the harbinger of dire eclipse. I would not live alway, because my spirit is offended by the scenes of discord and contention

which prevail around me;—scenes in which I am compelled to mingle, and which, perhaps, in my weakness I may be left to promote. I would not live alway, because I see in the distance a region that is free from storms;—a region in which not even a cloud lowers; and I would breathe that balmy atmosphere: I would walk beneath the very throne of the Prince of Peace: I would be able to look around me, to look before me, and reflect that there is not an element of tempest in all that portion of God's dominions in which I am to have my everlasting home.

V. The Christian would not live alway, because HE PREFERS THE FELLOWSHIP OF THE GLORIFIED TO THE SOCIETY OF THE IMPERFECT.

In this mixed state of being, the best men are frequently brought into contact with the bad; nay, even with the worst. It sometimes happens that a Christian has his lot cast in a family, one or more of whose members is openly vicious and profane; and sometimes even the Christian parent is compelled to the reflection that his own child, whom he meets every day in the discharge of parental offices, is a blasphemer or a profligate. But in addition to this, even the fellowship of CHRISTIANS in this world is a fellowship of miserably imperfect men. What Christian has not had his heart wounded by the inconsideration, the wickedness, it may be the absolute treachery, of some one who has claimed to be acknowledged as a brother in Christ? What Christian has not sometimes been ready to ask, while he has wept over the spectacle of a religious community arming themselves with the weapons of carnal warfare, "Is there faith on the earth?" What Christian but has sometimes felt the need of sympathy and co-operation, when it has been withheld; and when he would fain have opened his heart to the invigorating influence of a godly, fraternal fellowship, has found himself well-nigh chilled in the freezing atmosphere of indifference and formality?

Not so in the world which christian faith anticipates. There all will be bound together in the cords of love; all will be helpers to gether of each other's joy. ALL—and who will they be? First, all the ransomed out of every nation, and kindred and tongue, and people. Every patriarch, every prophet, every apostle, every martyr, every saint of every age, and clime, and condition, will be there. Next, there will be the native inhabitants of heaven, who have always been loyal to their King: they will continue to be, as they ever have been, at home on the fields of immortality. Jesus the dying Lamb, the God and Hope of the world, the enthroned and all-gracious Savior, will be there, in mild and heavenly majesty; carrying forward the vast purposes of his mediatorial reign, and pour-

ing forth endless benedictions over the whole host of the glorified. This vast assembly will constitute one glorious fraternity of exalted minds. And is it any wonder that the Christian should desire to be among them? Is it strange that when rivers of water run down his eyes because men keep not God's law; when his heart bleeds from wounds that have been inflicted by hands with which his own had been joined in the bond of covenant engagements—is it strange, I ask, that he should be more than willing, in God's best time, to join the eternal fellowship of heaven?

I would not live alway, because I would escape from a companionship with those who despise my Redeemer and his salvation; because I do not wish my ear to be always accustomed to sounds of blasphemy, or mine eye to spectacles of profligacy and crime. I would not live alway, because even the communion of saints on earth is imperfect and often embittered; and I never know what either I or those with whom I am associated may be left to do, to destroy each other's peace. I would not live alway, because I expect to meet in heaven those Christian friends whom I love below, purified from their dross, and advanced to a state of absolute perfection; because my bosom burns with a desire to mingle with the great and the good of other ages; because I would fain see Abraham, and Moses, and Paul, face to face; because I would hear the martyrs tell with their own lips the story of their sufferings and their triumphs, and would join them in a tribute of thanksgiving for all-sustaining and all-conquering grace. No; I would not live alway, because the society of heaven is better than the society of earth. I would rather see my Redeemer as he is, and gaze upon his unveiled glory, than to hold communion even with HIM through the channel of his ordinances.

VI. Once more: The Christian would not live alway, BECAUSE HE PREFERS THE HONORS OF VICTORY TO THE PERILS OF WARFARE.

Imperfectly sanctified as he is, surrounded by temptations as he is, it cannot otherwise be than that he should be subjected to perpetual conflict. The adversary is watching to make war upon him; and he is to be resisted. The ungodly world would fain lay snares for his feet; and their insidious efforts are to be defeated. Evil passions and affections inhabit his own bosom; and their clamor is to be hushed, and their power broken. Indeed, the religious life is one unbroken spiritual campaign: the enemies to be encountered are the most formidable which either earth or hell can turn out; and though grace is promised to the believer according to his day, and though God's word is pledged for his ultimate triumph,

yet he never knows but that, through his own infirmity or corruption, he may be temporarily overcome; and he is never safe if a single sentinel is withdrawn from any watchtower of his heart. Yes, he goes through the world as a combatant. He is required always to appear in arms. He fights his way up to the gate of heaven; and only resigns his armor in the act of putting off the garments of mortality.

The warrior endures with patience the hardships of the camp, and rushes fearlessly into the din of battle, not because he loves deprivation and danger, but because he connects with them the hope of victory. Victory, victory is the word that falls like music upon his ear—that burns in glory upon his heart; and when he looks around and finds himself in an army of conquerors, and feels that he is himself a conqueror too, how much more grateful is this than to be lying in ambush, or marching in the storm, or wading in blood, yet uncertain whether the fortunes of war may place him with the victors or the vanquished. He is resigned to his sufferings in view of the hopes which hang upon them; but he would not suffer always; he would hear the shouts of victory and bear the honors of victory, as soon as he can. And can it be otherwise with the Christian in his conflict? However patient he may be to wait God's time, must he not be comforted by the thought that his enemies will ere long lie prostrate at his feet; and must not his bosom sometimes kindle with strong desire to enter upon his eternal triumph? This is the place for wielding the sword of the Spirit, and wearing the shield of faith, and encountering the fiery darts of the adversary; but in yonder world the inhabitants bear palms, and wear crowns, and sit on thrones, in token of their being everlasting conquerors. Who would live alway in a world where fighting is the appropriate work; especially when there is a world in prospect where no hostile tongue shall ever move, and no hostile foot shall ever tread?

I would not live alway, because I would not always be harassed by spiritual enemies, and engaged in an eternal conflict. I would have this usurper within not only dethroned, but driven away. I would be beyond the reach of the devil's wiles. I would be able to lay my armor by, and feel that the contest had closed in glory. I would not live alway, because I long to feel that I have come off conqueror; I long to receive the blood-bought crown, and cast it at the feet of my enthroned Lord I would not live alway, because I had rather my heart should thrill with joy than throb with apprehension: I had rather my lips should be used to songs of immortal

triumph, than even to supplications for God's grace to keep me from being overcome.

But I hear some one saying, "There is one thing which perhaps you have forgotten: there is a dark boundary—not a mountain, but a flood, that lies between earth and heaven; and that is to be passed before the Christian conqueror can be crowned." No, I have not forgotten that: I stand upon an eminence now, with that flood rolling and raging beneath my feet; and even here I repeat, I would not live alway. For I know that my Redeemer liveth, and I rely upon him to bear me over; and if I may only rest upon his arm, I can walk firmly, though the tempest howls above, and the waters roar around. No, I would not alway—Rise, ye dark and stormy billows, to frighten my poor soul, as much as ye will: Rise, ye fiends of darkness, and make your last desperate effort to terrify and overwhelm; and in the courage of faith I dare say even to you, I would not live alway.

"Jesus, the vision of thy face
Hath overpowering charms;
Scarce shall I feel death's cold embrace,
If Christ be in my arms.

"Then, when ye hear my heartstrings break,
How sweet the minutes roll,
A mortal paleness on my cheek,
And glory in my soul!"

SERMON CCLXXI.

BY REV. W. B. SPRAGUE, D. D.

THE CROWN OF THORNS AND THE MANY CROWNS.

MATT. XXVII. 29.—*And when they had platted a crown of thorns they put it upon his head:*

—IN CONNECTION WITH—

REV. XIX. 12.—*And on his head were many crowns.*

These two passages, as you will remember, refer to the same glorious personage, though they represent him in different and opposite conditions.

The former represents him in the depth of his humiliation: not only as an inhabitant of this world of sorrow, and an heir to the common sufferings of humanity, but as in the midst of that protracted scene of anguish in which he yielded himself up a sacrifice for the sins of men. The latter represents him in his glorified state; as occupying the mediatorial throne; as exalted to be head over all things to the church, and receiving the grateful homage of adoring millions. Christians, each of these passages announces a fact into which the angels desire to look; and the two facts, viewed in their connexion, may very properly form the basis of our sacramental meditations. Let us, then, before we surround the table, dwell for a few moments upon the "crown of thorns" and upon the "many crowns;" and show how the wearing of the one stood related to the wearing of the other.

"And when they had platted a CROWN OF THORNS, they put it upon his head."

When we read that our blessed Lord suffered the ignominious death of the cross, it is only a very inadequate idea of his sufferings that is conveyed to the mind. He might have been crucified without having endured the agony of the garden; without having been betrayed by one disciple, and denied by another, and deserted by all. He might have been crucified without going through with

that scene of horrible insult and cruelty to which he was subjected in the pretorium; without being gorgeously arrayed, in derision of his claims as a king; without being saluted in mockery by a blood-thirsty rabble; without having his sacred temples perforated by a crown of thorns. Indeed, it is the CIRCUMSTANCES of his crucifixion, especially in those which constituted the horrible preparation for it, rather than in the event itself, that we are to look for that which gives it such fearful prominence in the annals of suffering.

It is one of these circumstances only that is recorded in our text; and though our familiarity with it may diminish the influence which it is fitted to exert, yet where is the individual who can hold it to his mind without some tender and painful emotions? Suppose, at this moment, you were to see a crown of thorns brought forth to be placed upon the head of some person in this assembly—if you please, upon one whom you regard as your enemy—one whom you pass silently, when you meet him in the street; suppose you should see it laid carefully upon his head, and then pressed down, so that the thorns might penetrate deeply, and in a moment should see his entire body enveloped in purple gore—I ask you whether such a spectacle would not cause your own blood to set back with horror? And yet this was just what occurred in reference to our blessed Redeemer, the record of which you have perhaps read or heard a thousand times, without ever being deeply or seriously affected by it. My Redeemer wearing a crown of thorns! Was it not enough, blessed Jesus, that thou shouldst have endured that bloody sweat; that thou shouldst have felt that cruel scourge; that thou shouldst have worn that scarlet robe; that they should have bowed the knee in mockery, and deridingly hailed the as a king? No, thou must wear the crown of thorns—thy murderers are not satisfied—the malignant spirits of hell are not satisfied to have thy blood, except as the result of a protracted and lingering scene of torture; and into that scene the crown of thorns must enter!

Oh, how much CRUELTY was there in putting this thorny crown upon the blessed Redeemer's head! Had he done anything to provoke such barbarous treatment? Nothing else than to strain every nerve, both in action and in suffering, to bless and save the world. And yet here he is, with all the sensibilities of human nature in lively exercise, with the same kind of flesh and blood, of nerves and fibres, that you and I possess, bleeding, agonizing, under a crown of thorns; and even this was only a drop in the flood of anguish which was constituted by the whole scene in all its preparatory and attending circumstances!

But there was CONTEMPT as well as cruelty implied in putting this crown upon his head. It is far easier to bear bodily suffering than reproach and ignominy; but in the crown of thorns there was involved not less of the latter than of the former. Jesus had, without the semblance of ostentation, and yet with the conscious dignity of truth, declared himself a king; and hence they array him in mock majesty, and put a crown of thorns upon his head, in derision of the authority which he claimed, and pass before him bowing the knee and insultingly casting his own words into his teeth. Never was there so much of ignominy heaped upon any other being. The ingenuity of hell itself was tasked to make that man of sorrows appear unworthy of a place on God's footstool; and when he sunk at last into the arms of death, he sunk under a burden of ignominious torture.

Such was "the crown of thorns" which Jesus wore on Calvary. Let us now pass from a consideration of this to a view of the "MANY CROWNS" which he now wears in heaven. When the beloved disciple saw him in his glorified state, he declares that "on his head were many crowns."

It is evident from the connexion in which these words occur, that they refer rather to his mediatorial dominion than to his absolute and original proprietorship of all things. As God the Creator, God the Preserver, God the universal Sovereign, well may the whole creation crown him Lord of all; but that there is particular reference in THIS passage to his mediatorial glory, is evident from the fact that he is here called by the peculiar names by which Christ as Mediator is designated; such as "the Faithful and True," and especially, "the Word of God;" and moreover, the whole scene which is here described seems to recognize him exclusively in his mediatorial dignity. What then, more particularly, are we to understand, by his having upon his head "many crowns?"

It implies that he has the whole creation in subjection to his authority; that every thing lives, and moves, and acts, as the effect of his will; that every event is rendered tributary to his purposes, and every creature is made to minister to his glory.

Look abroad upon THIS EARTH, and you behold nothing but what is included in the Mediator's dominion. When you see imprisoned nature bursting from the grave of winter into the bloom and melody of spring; when you see the golden harvest falling before the reaper's sickle; when you view the mountain proudly lifting itself among the clouds; when the thunders roll and the ligtnings play around you; when the cattle sport themselves on a thousand hills,

and the air as well as the earth seems teeming with a busy population; in all this infinitude of existence, there is not a being, not an object, but is subject to the Mediator's control—not one but according to its nature is rendered subservient to his will. The conflicts of nations the convulsions of empires, the pestilence that stalks through the world, the earthquake that swallows up cities, all seem to be adverse to the purposes of Messiah's reign; and yet they are part of the instrumentality by which he is accomplishing the vast designs of his government; they are all under his direction, tending to a result by which his mediatorial glory will be completely illustrated. He has the hearts of all men in his hand; of all good men, and of all wicked men; and while by his grace he constrains the former to do his will, by his wisdom and his power he renders the latter also instrumental of promoting his glory. Even those who fight against his cause are compelled to become tributary to its interests; the wrath of man he causes to praise him, and the remainder of wrath he restrains.

Next, fasten your eyes upon THESE VISIBLE HEAVENS; upon this magnificent arch above you, in which you behold the sun by day and the moon and the stars by night: especially contemplate the evening sky, apparently studded with innumerable gems, but really peopled with an infinity of worlds, each of which performs its stated revolution, while all move together in perpetual and unbroken concert; and here again you have discovered nothing so vast but that it is moved by the Mediator's hand, and accomplishes the Mediator's will. What the character of the inhabitants of those worlds may be, or what revelations of divine wisdom may be made to them, we know not; but we do knows, from the lively oracles, that they belong to the dominion of the Son of God.

And now let faith penetrate beyond the range of mortal vision, to THE REGION OF IMMORTAL LIGHT AND GLORY, where there is no need of the sun nor of the moon, for the Lord God is the light thereof; and there, too, does the Mediator exercise his dominion; nay, that is peculiarly and pre-eminently the seat of his gracious dominion; for there every heart beats in unison with his will, every tongue is ready, and every harp is strung, to show forth his praise. If you will know the loyalty of the ransomed and the glorified to their King, listen to that report which an eye-witness made of his visit to the heavenly city: "And I beheld, and I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne, and the living ones and the elders; and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand and thousands of thousands, saying, with a loud voice, Worthy is the

Lamb that was slain to receive power and riches, and wisdom and strength, and honor and glory and blessing!"

And if you draw near and stoop over the verge of HELL, even there—though there is wailing and torment and blasphemy, yet even there, amidst all those night shades of eternal death, the Mediator still exercises his reign; he reigns over those imprisoned spirits in wrath and justice; and the most fearful attributes of his character are written on the smoke of their torment, which ascendeth up for ever and ever.

The Mediator's reign, then, is absolutely universal. Not the most magnificent globe that sweeps through immensity, nor the least dust of the balance that is borne upon the wind; not the brightest seraph in heaven, nor the blackest fiend in hell; not the grandest or the most insignificant event that ever occurs in any world; is without the range of his empire. In reference to the splendor and the perpetuity of such a reign, may he not well be represented as wearing many crowns?

Yes, I repeat, the personage who wore the crown of thorns once, and he who wears the many crowns now, is the same; and it was his wearing the one which constituted his preparation for wearing the other.

Such sufferings as the Redeemer experienced when the crown of thorns pierced his head, could never have been inflicted upon such a personage as he was, but for the accomplishment of some mighty purpose;—never could have been inflicted upon him under the government of a wise and righteous God, but in consideration of their being followed by some glorious reward. And this is just in accordance with the fact as it is stated by the prophet Isaiah: "When thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand. He shall see of the travail of his soul and shall be satisfied." The government of the world becomes his in his mediatorial capacity, by purchase. It is because he died in ignominy upon the cross, that he has had all things put under his feet, being made head over all things to the church. It is because he received meekly and calmly the crown of thorns, that those many crowns, radiant with countless gems of glory, now glitter, and are destined for ever to glitter, upon his head.

And now, let me ask, what Christian among you all would desire to go to heaven on a flowery bed of ease? This was not the way in which Jesus gained possession of his many crowns; nor is it the way in which those who profess to be his disciples should de-

sire to be led on to their final reward. Oh, brethren, methinks our subject consecrates every scene of trouble. Methinks it consecrates the Christian's deathbed, and the Christian mourner's weeds, and every heaving of the bosom which grief occasions in this vale of sorrow. For, Christian sufferer, those tears of thine are a seed which are destined to yield a harvest of glory. Thou art travelling upward, to a world where songs shall take the place of groans; and a crown of life shall mark thee as an eternal conqueror. Be still, then, though thou art bending in anguish, to catch the last whisper of thy dearest friend. Be still, though thou art just going down into the dark valley; for this momentary tempest is the harbinger of a serene eternity. Surely thou mayest afford to be still, when Jesus, thy Saviour, calmly endured the crown of thorns!

And, finally, our subject supplies us with a most appropriate theme to take with us to the sacramental table. Christian, meditate upon the crown of thorns. Meditate upon the many crowns. Meditate upon the one as the glorious consequence of the other. And if you do this, in a proper manner, you will feel in your heart, throbs of penitential sorrow; your faith will kindle into brighter exercise; your hope in God's gracious covenant will grow stronger; and perhaps the joy that is unspeakable and full of glory may fill and satisfy your soul. Join, then, ye ransomed saints, while you are assembled to commemorate your Redeemer's death, while you have the crown of thorns and the many crowns before the eye of your faith—join in the exercise of devout gratitude, join, in anticipation of the joys of his presence—one and all, join, to crown him Lord of the Creation!

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SERMON CCLXXII.

BY MARK TUCKER, D. D., Providence, R. I.

PAUL'S VISIT TO ROME.

Rom. xv. 29.—*And I am sure that when I come unto you, I shall come in the fullness of the blessing of the gospel of Christ.*

The labors of St. Paul in the ministry are a literal and striking fulfillment of the commission he received from his Lord at the time of his conversion and call to the apostleship. *But rise and stand upon thy feet: for I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness both of these things which thou hast seen and of those things in the which I will appear unto thee? delivering thee from the people and from the Gentiles unto whom I now send thee, to open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me.* Nor did he ever forget the charge; the effect of this heavenly vision was never effaced from his mind. His labors were incessant. His great ruling principle was to do good;—of this he never lost sight. He had often signified a strong desire to visit Rome, but had always been hindered—pursuing one steady purpose, preaching the gospel and establishing churches, a convenient opening had never been presented. Such were his convictions of duty, that he could not break off in the midst of his labors and make a journey merely to gratify a private feeling. Not till there was no more place for him in those parts, that is, not till his work as an apostle was finished, could he think of leaving there: and to

show the multiplicity of his engagements, the weight of care that pressed upon him, he signified, that after he had visited Jerusalem, to carry the contributions he had received for the poor saints, he should spend a season in Rome, having in view at the same time a journey into Spain. Indefatigable laborer! what successor of thine shall catch thy mantle and imbibe thy spirit?

The same commission is given to every minister of Christ; the same principle ought to govern every act. All may have the same *object*, though not the same *opportunity*.

The text contains a strong expression of faith in regard to the apostle's proposed visit. A similar sentiment is contained in the first part of this Epistle. *For I long to see you, that I may impart unto you some spiritual gift, to the end you may be established.* It is interesting to trace the operations of a great mind so richly imbued with the spirit of Christ as the apostle's.

Our object in this discourse is to dwell upon the *design* and *assured effect* of St. Paul's visit to Rome.

I. His design or *object* is thus expressed: *I shall come in the fullness of the blessing of the gospel of Christ.*

His object, it appears, was *not to view the magnificence of the city:* Rome at this time had reached her zenith of glory; immense stores of wealth had been collected and expended in erecting public buildings; her merchants were princes, and lived in splendid habitations; there were scattered through the eternal city the most costly edifices, temples of vast dimensions, structures and pillars of immense height, fountains of great beauty; strangers from all parts of the civilized world had come to survey its extent, and admire the specimens of architecture—the display of genius. And although Paul was not destitute of taste, was not insensible of the existence of many wonders both of nature and of art the city contained, he did not feel himself at liberty to indulge even in innocent recreation while acting under his commission from the King of Zion.

What Foster so eloquently said of the devotedness of Howard the Philanthropist, may with still greater propriety be applied to Paul the Apostle: "I wonder what must have been the amount of that bribe in emolument or pleasure, that would have detained him from his great work. The law which carries

water down a declivity, was not more unconquerable and invariable than the determination of his feelings towards the main object. The importance of this object held his feelings in a state of excitement which was too rigid to be affected by lighter interests, and on which therefore the beauties of nature and of art had no power. He had no leisure feeling which he could spare to be diverted among the innumerable varieties of the extensive scene which he traversed; all his subordinate feelings lost their separate existence and operation, by falling into the grand one. There have not been wanting trivial minds to mark this as a fault in his character. But the mere men of taste ought to be silent respecting such a man; he is above their sphere of judgment. The invisible spirits, who fulfill their commission of philanthropy among mortals, do not care about pictures, statues, and sumptuous buildings; and no more did he, when the time in which he must have inspected and admired them, would have been taken from the work to which he had consecrated his life. The curiosity which he might feel, was reduced to wait till the hour should arrive, when its gratification should be presented by conscience, which kept a scrupulous charge of all his time, as the most sacred duty of that hour. He acted under a full conviction that he had *one thing to do*, and he who would do some great thing in this short life, must apply himself to the work with such a concentration of his forces, as to idle spectators who live only to amuse themselves, looks like insanity."

Nor was it his object to become acquainted with *her philosophers, her poets* or *her orators*. Although Paul admired genius and respected true greatness, and though Rome could then boast of a list of distinguished men, he had other objects in view. He went there not to gratify taste or curiosity, not to form acquaintances with the great and powerful, but *to preach the gospel*. This was his ambition, this his glory—*For to me who am less than the least of all saints is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ. For I determined not to know any thing among you save Jesus Christ and him crucified. God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.* He was confident the same almighty efficacy would accompany his preaching at Rome that

had been manifested at other places; therefore he says, *I shall come in the fullness of the blessing of the gospel of Christ;* he felt assured that a *divine unction* would accompany the truth—that he should be instrumental of the conversion of sinners.

In his Epistle to the Ephesians, the apostle enumerates the blessings they had received through the preaching of the gospel. *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.* The principal were, their election by grace, their holy vocation, predestination to the adoption of children, acceptance in Christ Jesus, and redemption through his blood; the revelation of the mystery of God's will, a title to the heavenly inheritance, the sanctifying and sealing influence of the Holy Spirit. To give any thing like a connected view of the nature of these blessings, as thus enumerated, would occupy several discourses. We remark in general, that his object was to impart *the knowledge, grace, and consolations of the gospel.*

Rome, though the metropolis of the world, the seat of science and the arts, the great emporium of the empire, the centre of power, was given up to idolatry; some faint rays of light began to pierce through the awful gloom; some adventurous martyr had found his way there, and lifted the pall from the world of moral death.

The apostle, filled with holy benevolence, longed to open a school of Christ in the midst of her overflowing population.

1. He desired to communicate *the knowledge of the gospel.* With all her wisdom, the imperial city *knew not God.* One design of his preaching would be to give them correct views of *the character of God.* For it is eternal life to know the true God, and Jesus Christ, whom he has sent. *Whom ye ignorantly worship,* said the apostle to a heathen city; *Him declare I unto you.* He would aim to make them acquainted with God in all the relations he sustained as Creator, Preserver, and Benefactor; as possessed of natural and moral attributes, as worthy the love and service of all his intelligent offspring. He would explain to them *the nature of God's moral government*—the wisdom of its laws; its adaptation to the character and circumstances of his creatures, as calculated to bring out their reigning disposition, to illustrate his paternal regard, at the same time to secure their obedience. He would *expound the law,* show its spiritual-

ity and extent, assert its claims, and vindicate its sanctions. He would next give them a history of God's *providence;* then present a view of *man*, his primitive purity, his ruin and recovery; he would then direct their attention to the great *mystery of godliness, God manifest in the flesh:* this would lead him to dwell upon *the person of the Meditator*, his divine and human natures, his vicarious sufferings, the sufficiency of his atonement, and the extent and perpetuity of his reign. He would speak of the *covenant of grace*, its provisions and stability; of the terms of salvation; the marks and evidences of Christian character, the works and victory of faith, and the retributions of the next world. As sound doctrinal knowledge lies at the foundation of Christian hope and holy obedience, the first object of the apostle would be to diffuse light to publish the truth, to instruct them in the knowledge of God and divine things. This he would do in all plainness and fidelity.

2. He desired to impart not only *the knowledge*, but THE GRACE OF THE GOSPEL.

He was always aware that the treasure of the gospel was committed to earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power might be of God. When therefore he spoke of any transforming influence exerted upon the heart, when he referred to renovation of mind or change of life, it was ascribed to God; when he alluded to any good done, he regarded himself as only an instrument. Still, he knew that the preaching of the gospel was the appointed means of spirtual blessings. He coveted success. He desired some seals of his ministry. As the word preached was the grand instrumentality of the conversion of sinners, he could be satisfied with nothing short of their turning to God. No state of outward prosperity in a church can satisfy a conscientious minister, if their spiritual interests decline. He knew that knowledge was important, but that grace was indispensable. He could not rest, therefore, in a mere discharge of duty; he desired to be instrumental in the conversion of men. He so aimed to present the truth, that his hearers would be convinced of sin, would feel their guilt in breaking the law of God, in withholding their hearts from him; when a spirit of inquiry was awakened, his solicitude for their spiritual welfare was proportionably increased—he urged them without delay to repent and believe the

gospel; he exposed every false resting-place, stripped them of every excuse; attempted to reduce them to the necessity of fleeing to Christ; he shut them up to the faith; the penitent, whose hearts were humbled, he directed to the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world. His object was to bring them into a state of acceptance with God; for while their hearts were unhumbled and their sins were unforgiven, they were every moment exposed to the divine displeasure; no duty, however seriously performed, would be acceptable, for *they that are in the flesh cannot please God.* To bring about a reconciliation with their offended Maker, he pointed them to Christ, the Days-man, the Mediator; assuring them that through this man is preached forgiveness of sins—that through Christ they could be justified from all things from which they could not be justified by the law of Moses.

In visiting such a city as Rome, a place of such immense business, where so much talent would be found, he knew enough of the world to expect that all would be interested in secular concerns—some would be intent upon the accumulation of wealth, others would be equally engaged in the pursuit of pleasure—multitudes would be enlisted in the race of worldly honor: in order to do them good, he must arrest their attention, bring them to feel that they had other interests at stake; that he could show them a more excellent way to live; that the gospel he preached was from God, and had claims which it was reasonable to acknowledge and dangerous to deny. He could not expect them to receive his assertions without proof, nor forsake all and follow Christ, without evidence of *their* lost condition and *his* ability to save. He would therefore, as in the case of Felix, adapt his instructions to their character and circumstances; he would reason to carry the understanding; preach the law, to enlighten the conscience and produce a sense of sin; he would hold up the doctrines of the cross to remove a sense of guilt. He desired to come in the *fullness of the blessing*, converting them from the error of their ways. Outward attention, therefore, was not enough; regular observance of the Sabbath, though desirable, would not satisfy; he aimed at a radical, entire, and saving change—any thing short of this, he knew, would leave them without the kingdom of God. The whole history of the apostle's

labors will show how simple was his aim, how uniform his object; what he desired for his kindred, according to the flesh, he desired for *all, that they might be saved.* For this Christ came into the world, for this his gospel was preached; he could not therefore find time to indulge a taste for literature or the fine arts; the love of Christ constrained him, the personal ministry of Christ was his pattern; he went in search of the lost, and rejoiced when he could bring back a wanderer to the fold. *The converted he gathered into the church.* There is no evidence that he ever encouraged a sinner to hope in the mercy of God who lived in the neglect of duty: hence there is no evidence in the Acts of the Apostles that any were accounted Christians who did not own Christ before men. And when it is recollected that a profession of religion was a step that attracted notice and generally exposed men to persecution; that for the most part laws were found in the statute-book authorizing the persecution of the saints, you will see that it required some energy of principle to be a Christian. The question of following Christ was not then agitated for weeks and months; it was decided promptly, in view of all the consequences.

Having gathered his converts into the visible church, he did not leave them to relapse into sin or sink into indolence. He urged upon them to grow in grace and in the knowledge of Christ; he represented the Christian life as a race to be run, the crown to be won was conferred only at the end—as a warfare which continued while we were in the flesh. He enjoined upon all the followers of Christ to forget the things that were behind, and press forward—to make progress in holiness. He assigned to each his appropriate duty, and gave no encouragement of divine approbation to such as shrunk from a just responsibility. His anxiety for men did not cease when they were gathered into the church. He watched over them with Christian faithfulness; he followed them with his prayers, aided them by his counsels, and gave them to understand that they would prosper in religion in proportion as they were active in duty and benevolent in their feelings. His daily prayer was, that they might know what was the hope of their calling, and what their peculiar dispensation.

3. He desired also to be instrumental in imparting to them *the consolations of the gospel.*

Their prospects while in a natural state were gloomy and uncertain. Sin, which had darkened their mind and filled them with ignorance, debased their natures and made them wretched. He knew he should find them a prey to distressing anxiety, exposed to many evils, the origin and design of which they did not understand, subject to disappointment, and while they possessed an immortal nature which stirring within led them to think of the future, ignorant of what was before them, unable to penetrate the gloom that rested upon the sepulchre, he had strong hopes that he should be able to relieve their fears and allay their anxieties by preaching to them the precious doctrines of the gospel; he would especially point them to the doctrine of the resurrection, by which life and immortality are brought to light. By this doctrine, in connection with the atonement, he would inspire a hope beyond the grave.

Another source of the consolation he would impart arises from *the assurance of an interest in Christ. I know*, said the apostle, *in whom I have believed.* He desired others to know. He preached the doctrine of justification by faith; of the witness of the Spirit—that amidst the conflicts and trials of life, the Christian may enjoy the calm and steady expectation of future blessedness. The first Christians under the instructions of the apostles, having committed their souls to Christ, felt secure in their hopes, and instead of going back to lay a new foundation, instead of lingering about the threshold of salvation, they pressed forward, gave their prayers and efforts to the conversion of the world: in this way, without their care, their happiness flowed like a river. *Great peace have they that love thy law, and nothing shall offend them.*

These blessings of knowledge, grace, and divine consolation, the apostle aimed to diffuse in all their fullness. They were blessings indeed. Could they be realized, could he be the happy instrument of imparting them, how would they render desirable such a visitant! Many of them had traveled into Greece to learn the arts, to acquire a knowledge of the sciences, but he came to confer upon them richer gifts—*spiritual* blessings, without which they must perish—*permanent* blessings, which would abide for ever. Worldly distinctions would soon be lost, earthly treasures would soon be scattered, or pass into other hands; but he came

to make them rich towards God, to put them in possession of a title to *an inheritance that is incorruptable, undefiled, and that fadeth not away.* A visit originating in such motives, and aiming at such results, occupied the mind of the apostle; and having been matured by prayer, was entered upon with *confidence.*

The *grounds of this confidence* we propose now to examine.

It is supposed that Paul was in Corinth when he projected this visit to Rome. He was sufficiently acquainted with the system of idolatry established throughout the heathen world, to know that he would meet with the most determined opposition. This system was identified with the whole structure of society; it pervaded all classes of the community; was strengthened by the instructions in elementary schools, was associated with all the domestic duties and enjoyments; with all their civil and military institutions. In every place of public resort, in every temple of worship, he would find an altar to some idol God. Under such a system of delusion, he might expect to find a state of morals the most degraded; in the midst of external splendor and georgeous luxury, the affections would be debased and the conscience seared; and while genius was admired and learning was cultivated, gross darkness rested on the mass of the people. If he listened to the dictates of reason, he would not visit such a stronghold of error to preach the gospel of Christ, whose spirit and doctrines were in direct opposition to every intellectual and moral habit. What could he hope to accomplish; a single individual, aided by a few obscure members of a church formed without patronage, without resources; human prudence would have dissuaded him from such an enterprise. If he had been influenced by a regard to reputation, he would have shrunk from such a step; he would not have hazarded his reputation; but while he knew the influence he must encounter from high places—how firmly superstition was entrenched in the hearts and habits of the community, what violent prejudices would be awakened, what opposition would be made to the truth—though he might be regarded by some as an enthusiast, by others as beside himself, he was determined to go, and he did not fear to express *an assurance of success.*

And I am sure that when I come unto you, I shall come in the fullness of the blessing of the gospel of Christ. In the strength of

this confidence did he enter upon the execution of his plans. Neither the reign of superstition, nor the prevalence of prejudice; neither the corruption of the people nor the power of princes, depressed his spirits or retarded his movements. His object was to bring the capital of that vast empire into subjection to the obedience of Christ.

The ground of his confidence rested on no sudden impulse, no unexplained impression: but,

1. *Upon the promise of Christ.*

He doubtless took great encouragement from the express language of prophecy: *I have given the heathen to my Son for his possession. As I live, saith the Lord, All the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the Lord.* These predictions might assure him that he would not labor in vain, nor spend his strength for naught; still, he could not learn from these whether God would specially bless *his* exertions, or whether the set time to favor Zion had come. When the Lord Jesus Christ gave commission to his apostles to *Go into all the world, and preach the gospel to every living creature*, he said, *Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.* The *import* of this precious promise is, that a divine influence should accompany their preaching, rendering the truth effectual. Without this, although he might by his reasoning convince the understanding, or by his appeals touch their sympathies, still he could not change the heart. For *Paul may* plant, and Apollos water, *but God giveth the increase.* His great Master knew the obstacles he would be called to encounter; obstacles which would try his faith and tend to paralyze his energies: he therefore assured him of his success in the midst of his trials, when he called him to the apostleship; he said, I now send thee unto the Gentiles *to open their* eyes *and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God;* as he received his commission from Christ, he felt assured he should not fail, for the promise had reference to the specific object for which he was sent. *Through Christ's strengthening he could do all things;* he could reclaim the wandering, fix the attention of the careless, subdue the pride of the heart, and bring down lofty imaginations; no stronghold could be so impregnable that he could not gain an entrance; no error so specious he could not expose it: though it was a world of vast darkness he

visited, he believed the light of life would dissipate it; his heart was not more intent upon the object than he was confident of success. The *certainty* of the promise was equal to its fullness. The Lord Jesus Christ had a special interest in its accomplishment. He had borne their sins in his own body on the tree. The Father had said he should *see of the travail of his own soul and be satisfied;* what was left for the apostle was, to preach the word and plead the promise before God. How could he doubt? If he looked to the Author of the promise, the stability of the covenant, the interest of the Saviour in the success of truth, he *must* believe that the great truths of the gospel would prove mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds; if the Son of God had said, *Lo, I am with you,* my Spirit shall go before you, he might have confidence, that however feeble his ministrations or inadequate his efforts, they would prove mighty through God. A hope that rested on *such* a foundation could not fail. Is anything too hard for the Lord? Hath he spoken and shall he not do it? The character of Christ, the truth of his promise, the success of his cause, was staked upon the mission of the apostles. And though he turned his face to Rome, where Satan's seat was, where superstition reigned almost without a check, where power and prejudice were armed against the gospel, yet, relying upon the promise of Christ, he believed he should be instrumental in turning many to righteousness, of adding to the church such as should be saved.

2. His confidence in the promise was strengthened by *past experience* of its truth.

When he first began to preach the gospel to the Jews, the Spirit bore witness to the truth. As he opened their Scriptures, and alleged that Jesus was the Christ, many were convinced. And when he turned to the Gentiles, he had still greater success. He had seen them obedient, by word and deed, through mighty signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God. He had already taken a wide circuit, dispensing the gospel of the grace of God. He says, from Jerusalem, and round about Illiricum, *I have fully preached the gospel of Christ.* In all these places, as he had not shunned to declare the whole counsel of God, he had been encouraged by seeing the fruit of his labors. He argued, from the success which had attended him in other

places, that he should succeed in Rome. The circumstances would be similar; he would be called to attack the same system of idolatry; and, having fully tried the gospel as an instrument of conversion, being convinced of its adaptation, having witnessed triumphs, he was ready to preach it at Rome also.

There was another consideration which strengthened his confidence in the promise of Christ: *the providence of God* had been his shield in danger. The King of Zion, when he sent out his ministers, early gave intimation that he would watch over their personal safety. *They shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them.* The apostle, in the execution of his commission, had been exposed to enemies and dangers, his life had been in imminent peril, but God had cast over him the broad shield of his protection; and he argued that he was preserved from threatened death, because there was other work for him to do. He was well aware of the hazard of setting up the standard of Christ in a heathen city, of preaching an uncompromising gospel to lovers of pleasure, aspirants after power, to the proud and idolatrous; that he could not expose their system of error and denounce the wrath of God against all unrighteousness of men, without stirring the indignation of the carnal mind; still he would dare to do it, for He who had opened a way of escape from former dangers, would now be his defence, and clothe his message with power.

3. His cofidence rested on *the indications of providence*, both in regard to himself and to the church at Rome.

1st, In *regard to himself*. God had given him a strong desire to visit them. The feelings of a minister are no slight indications of the divine will. The apostle inferred from the fact that he strongly desired to see them, that his visit would prove a blessing. *For God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel of his Son, that without ceasing I make mention of you always in my prayers; making request if by any means now at length I might have a prosperous journey by the will of God to come unto you. For I long to see you, that I may impart unto you some spiritual gift, to the end you may be established.*

And no other door was opened to him in lesser Asia. He had formerly been hindered; there had been much work for him to do; *but now, having no more place in these parts, and having a*

great desire these many years to come unto you, whensoever I take my journey into Spain, I will come to you. He is thus particular, because he believed the purpose of God was to be determined by the leadings of his providence.

Said the venerable Dr. Carey, the father of modern missions to the East, soon after he entered upon his work in Asia, "All my hope is in God; and when I reflect that he has stirred me up to the work, and wrought wonders to prepare the way, I can hope in his providence, and am encouraged and strengthened."

2d, The apostle was equally encouraged by the feeling of the church. It appears they had a similar desire to see him. Their hearts were drawn out to him; they reposed confidence in his character, and believed his visit would be profitable. In the case of his visit to Macedonia, a special revelation was given, because no previous disposition to hear the gospel had been evinced; but here they were ready to receive the word. As every obstacle which had existed from his engagements and duties was removed, and the church at Rome were waiting for him, he could not hesitate. O, how does it encourage the heart of the minister, when the people, like Cornelius and his friends, are disposed to hear all that is spoken in the name of Christ! when they are prepared to co-operate with him in every good word and work, giving him their countenance, holding up his hands by their sympathy!

4. His confidence rested on *the prayers of the church.*

The apostle had a high sense of the *efficacy of prayer.* He was fully convinced of the established connection between the bestowment of blessings and that preparation that is obtained by asking for them. It is no less true that God is the source of all divine influence, than that he will be inquired of, sought unto, to bestow that influence. The apostle, though abundantly furnished to his great work, so far from relying upon his gifts, repeatedly solicited an interest in the prayers of those whom he had begotten in the gospel. In the verse following the text, in reference to his intended journey to Jerusalem, the dangers to which he might be exposed, the prejudices he might be called to encounter, he earnestly entreats the prayers of his brethren at Rome. *Now I beseech you, brethren, for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake, and for the love of the Spirit, that ye strive together with me*

in your prayers to God for me; that I may be delivered from them that do evil in Judea; and that my service which I have for Jerusalem may be accepted of the saints; that I may come unto you with joy by the will of God, and may with you be refreshed. The degree of confidence he reposed in the prayers of God's people is expressed in his Epistle to the Philippians—*For I know that this shall turn to my salvation through your prayer, and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ.* When therefore he had reason to believe that in reference to his proposed visit to Rome, multitudes of the saints were daily at the throne on his behalf, lifting up their hearts that he might be an instrument of good, he might well say, *I am sure that when I come unto you, I shall come in the fullness of the blessing of the gospel of Christ.*

Such are some of the grounds of the apostle's confidence; it was not hastily indulged nor blindly persisted in; it rested on a reasonable basis; nor was he made ashamed of his hope. His subsequent history proved that his divine Master went with him. Some even of Ceasar's household believed. He planted the standard of the cross on the royal palace, and the lodgment which had been in Rome was maintained, and the victories commenced were carried forward, till every idol was prostrate, every heathen temple consecrated to the living God; till incense and a pure offering ascended from every altar.

We close this discussion with a few brief remarks.

1. *We see what ought to be the sole and single object of ministers who visit a people*; the same that was before the apostle; to be instrumental of doing good; *to make them wise unto salvation.*

This should be the controling object of every minister—to this he ought to bend all his powers, direct all his efforts; for this he ought to make every sacrifice, give up every perference; for this mortify his love of ease, of society, of science; his regard for reputation, his desire of influence. Accounting it his highest honor to be associated with Christ and his apostles in the divine work of evangelizing the world; every step he takes should be directed to the attainment of this object, every sermon and visit have this only aim. Surely it is wise to view this subject *now* as we shall view it on a bed of death, with eternity in view, when the worth of souls and a sense of obligation is realized. How did the venerable Brown of Had-

dington, the pious Doddridge, the devoted Baxter, look upon the object of a minister's study and labor, when they came to die? They regretted that they had not been more single in their view and dealt more faithfully with souls. How can I gain the largest accessions to the kingdom of Christ, how can I be the means of bringing the greatest number of sinners to Jesus, is the question which ought to engross a minister's most vigorous thoughts. He should be a man of *one* purpose.

2. We may learn *that all success is of God.*

Although the apostle preached and labored and prayed as though the whole weight of the vast fabric of the church rested upon him, still he manifested as much dependence, looked as much for aid from above, as though he had done nothing. He seemed to understand perfectly these two great principles of the gospel—activity on the one hand, and dependence on the other.

No man ever exercised more vigilance and self-denial, more engagedness and perseverance; no man ever prayed and trusted more; lived more by faith, or put on more patience; and yet, after all his tears and prayers, his watering and planting, he felt that God must give the increase. And in this he is the pattern of every gospel minister. Those who depend upon their own resources and accomplishments, upon talent and learning, policy and eloquence, will find that there is a darkness upon the human understanding which no light of reason and science can dissipate—an obduracy in the natural heart which no arguments can overcome, no persuasion soften. It is *not by might nor by power*, but by the living energy of the Spirit of God, that the heart is renewed, and the sinner saved. After Paul had gone on from conquering to conquer, planting churches and bringing men to a knowledge of the truth he pauses in the midst of his victories, and says, lest any should trust in man, *Who then is Paul, who then is Apollos, but ministers*, mere instruments *by whom ye believed? All our sufficiency is of God.*

3. *When ministers are full of faith and the people are engaged in prayer, we may expect a divine efficacy to accompany the word.*

Ministers and people exert a mutual influence upon each other, for good or for evil. What if the apostle, in his visit to Rome, had turned aside to see the various objects of interest

the city presented ; what if he had associated with the gay, or engaged in political strife ; how would the church, who had been praying for him, been humbled ; her energy would have been paralyzed ; or had he, coming in ardent hope of winning souls to Christ, found the church divided, or encumbered with worldly care, given to pleasure, or ambitious of worldly distinction, how would he have wept in secret places—his confidence had died away. The zeal and consistency of a minister encourage a church, while the sincerity and prayerfulness of a church greatly inspirit a pastor, arm him with courage. When a people expect a blessing, and are united in prayer, when they have a hearing ear, the preacher feels that he shall not labor in vain. But if the church is cold and formal ; if meetings for prayer are neglected ; if family worship is given up, and the children are left without instruction and are not restrained, sinners are confirmed in their errors, the word preached will not profit, and the minister, dejected and said, returns to his closet to weep. It is doubtless true, the state of the minister and church decide the prospects of sinners—if they are formal, those without are hardened. But, brethren, notwithstanding all my discouragements, arising from myself and from others, relying upon divine grace, in some humble sense I can adopt the language of the apostle in the text—I have strong confidence that we shall yet see great things—this extensive field of death will yet be animated —this valley of vision yet be visited by the breath of the Almighty—I see it—*Gird thy sword upon thy thigh, O Most mighty, and ride forth, prosperously because of truth and meekness, and let thy right hand teach thee terrible things. Let thine arrows be sharp in the heart of the King's enemies.*

Come Lord Jesus, in the power of grace, conquering and to conquer. *Behold, the vision shall come, it shall not tarry ; wait for it*, in the attitude of prayer and activity.

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SERMON CCLXXIII.

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THE PULPIT WORTH MORE THAN IT COSTS.

Matthew xxvi. 8.—"*To what purpose is this waste?*"

This question of avarice, prompted by seeing a box of precious ointment poured on the head of the Saviour, is common to all those, whose calculations of profit and loss, in the various enterprises of men, are confined to mere dollars and cents. To Judas it seemed that any expenditure, which did not directly put money in the bag that he bore, was a dead loss; and hence that the ointment expended on the head of Jesus, by a forgiven sinner, as an expression of her gratitude, and which might have been sold for three hundred pence, was so much wasted. In his estimation, penitence and gratitude, generosity and kindness, were of far less value than the pence which might have been realized by the sale of the ointment.

The same question is still asked in view of expenditures for which the making of money is not the immediate object; and especially is this true in relation to the support of Public Worship. In this connection, there are many who ask, "To what purpose is this waste?" "Will the money expended for the education and support of the Christian ministry, be as valuable to the people, as if it had been well invested in merchandise or the stocks?" And because the money so devoted is supposed to be wasted, there are multitudes in this Christian land who have retired altogether from the institutions of the gospel, and refused to take any responsibility in regard to their support.

It becomes, then, the duty of Christians to consider whether this complaint be well founded—whether the worldly and the avaricious consult even their best temporal interests in thus refusing to support the religion of the gospel. That godliness has the promise of the life that now is, as well as of that which is to come, the Bible distinctly declares; and surely, if the gospel is thus benign on the interests of the present life; if its institutions, wherever vigorously supported and cordially loved, are vitally connected with man's best good for time, as well as for eternity, the fact can be demonstrated; for the experiment has been repeatedly made in all the varieties of human condition, and the fruits of that experiment are now before the world, furnishing indubitable proof for or against the gospel, as the friend of man in his present relations. And it is for the purpose of removing the charge of wastefulness from this expenditure, and of drawing all hearts more warmly around the Pulpit, and every evangelical institution, that I shall confine the discussion mainly to this single aspect of the case—to the fruits of the experiment, which the gospel has made for the elevation and happiness of man in the present world.

The proposition which I shall attempt to illustrate is this—THE PULPIT IS WORTH MORE THAN IT COSTS FOR ITS SUPPORT.

1. *Because it increases the value of every kind of useful property.*

This is a matter of fact, even though I should fail to account for it. That property was worth more in Jerusalem, at the time of David and Solomon, than during the reign of the unprincipled Ahab, is a fact, apparent to the dullest apprehension. Nor would the reason seem to be less obvious. There was, in the one case, a strong moral influence, resulting solely from religious institutions, which threw around the heart of depravity such restraints, that it dared not become aggressive on the rights and property of others; while in the other, a false religion was substituted for the true, and thus the restraints, arising from the fear and love of God, were generally removed from the public mind. Was the vineyard of Naboth, the Jezreelite, as valuable to him, as it would have been, if a man that feared God, and loved righteousness, had sat on the throne, instead of the self-seeking Ahab? And what shall we say of the people of Sodom, where Lot could not exercise the rites of hospitality to his angel guests, by reason of the surrounding depravity and licentiousness, compared with the community over which Abraham presided? Had religion, or the want of it, nothing to do in enhancing or diminishing the value of property in the two places? What was Lot's house in Sodom worth, liable, as it was, every night, to be broken open, and himself and family exposed to all the

horrors of unbridled licentiousness? Would this state of things have existed, had the spirit of Abraham generally prevailed in that community? But how came Abraham to be in possession of a better spirit? Had religion nothing to do in making this difference?

Thus too in France, during the reign of terror, every kind of property sunk in value, by reason of the insecurity afforded by the government. Whence came that insecurity? Manifestly from the annihilation of all religious restraints, and from the substitution of a rampant and licentious infidelity. Nor did the public mind become settled, and property and life secure, till the re-establishment of the forms of religion, of order, and of law. Thus, also, the intrinsic value of the soil in Turkey is doubtless much greater than that of New England; and yet the poorest acre of New England may be more valuable for purposes of permanent occupancy, than the same quantity of the richest land in Turkey, because in the one case you are protected in your rights by a vigorous conscience in the body politic, while in the other you are constantly exposed to a lawless rapacity, and know not in the morning but the bowstring may be applied to your neck, or the bastinado to your feet before night. Here, your fruitful fields and tasteful dwellings, affording evidence that you are in the direct road to wealth and prosperity, call forth tokens of approbation from your friends and neighbors; while there, such indications would be regarded as certain evidence that the time had come for your property to be confiscated, and yourself to perish by the hand of violence. But would this state of awful insecurity to life and property continue, think you, if the Pulpits of New England were transferred thither, rousing the people to the assertion of their rights, and impressing the public mind with the conviction of a personal responsibility to God? Would not the cross of Christ, and the power of the Spirit, exhibited in connection with the ministrations of the Pulpit, tame the ferocity of the Turk, and restore peace and safety to that distracted kingdom?

There is another fact in this relation which should not be overlooked: it is the remarkable one, that nowhere, except where Christianity prevails, can you find those partnerships in trade and commerce, which are indispensable in order to give to property its greatest value. This fact, attested by travellers and missionaries in Pagan countries, speaks volumes in favor of Christianity, as the friend and promoter of earthly prosperity. Why cannot heathens, as well as Christians, combine their wealth, so as to give it greater value, by giving it greater power of accumulation? It is because their religion, or rather the want of true religion, forbids the exercise of mutual confidence, creating universal distrust, and making every man

an iceberg to his neighbor. Hence the reason why, in Pagan countries, you cannot find any associations for purposes of trade or commerce—of banking or benevolence. Hence their resources are crippled, and the public mind is stagnant. But let the Christian Pulpit be planted there, and the truth, as it is in Jesus, pervade the hearts and minds of the people, and the now dead mass would at once exhibit signs of life, and put on such an aspect of enterprise and prosperity as heathenism never saw, and can never produce. So true is this connection, that a distinguished instructor was accustomed to say to his pupils, "Give me the religion of a country, and I will tell you all the rest;"—the kind of religion determining the character of the people—whether they were torpid or active—ignorant or enlightened—bondmen or free.

Further illustrations of this point might be gathered from not a few villages even in New England, where the experiment of abandoning the institutions of religion has been tried. One only, however, will be given, because this one is a fair representative of all the rest. In one of the towns of a neighboring county the people voluntarily deprived themselves of a preached gospel for several years, till the difference between them and the adjoining town in their want of thrift and prosperity became proverbial, and till they themselves were convinced that, in forsaking the Pulpit, they had forsaken their own mercies. At length, they repaired their weather-beaten and almost ruined church, and settled a devoted minister of the gospel, with an effect so marked on the enterprise of the people, that one of their most intelligent men remarked, but a few weeks since, that their farms had increased fifty per cent. in value, and that an entirely new aspect had been put on the dwellings, as well as on the spirit of the people.

In view, then, of these and similar facts, are we not justified in saying, that the pulpit increases the value of every kind of useful property, and therefore that it is worth more than it costs for its support?

II. The Pulpit is worth more than it costs, because the vices and crimes which it restrains cost more than the restraining influence.

This statement will commend itself at once to all who are familiar with the expenditures of vice. Indeed, it is only another way of saying, that vice is more expensive than virtue; that it costs more to support a drunkard than a sober man; more to sustain the licentious than the chaste; more to secure and convict a criminal than to have prevented him from becoming a criminal.

One of the shrewdest lawyers in the land, after a careful and laborious examination of the statistics of criminal jurisprudence, has authorized the following statements. In the State of New York, the actual convictions of criminals are one to every seven hundred inhabitants; and, taking the country at large, it will be safe to say one to every thousand inhabitants. At this rate, we have at least thirteen thousand criminals already convicted, and three thousand unconvicted. Here, then, are sixteen thousand accomplished villains. The expense of supporting a prudent man may be estimated at two hundred dollars annually—making the cost of supporting these sixteen thousand criminals three millions two hundred thousand dollars a year. Add to this, the loss occasioned by counterfeiting money—the wase in dissipation and riots—the costs attending unsuccessful prosecutions for crime—losses sustained by fires, which have been ascertained to have been kindled by incendiaries, and the sum total of the estimate is nine millions of dollars. "So that the honest part of this nation pay more for the support of crime than is paid for all our naval and land forces, forts, arsenals, navy-yards, ordnance, armories, Indian pensions, and internal improvements put together!"—proof this, that human laws, however severe, can never prevent the commission of crime. But the sanctified influence of the Pulpit can do it; for, so great is its power of prevention, that criminals, and those who intend to become such, are seldom seen in the house of God. Indeed, the conscience, which is educated in the sanctuary, brings the day of judgment and final retribution too near to allow men to become aggressive on the rights and happiness of their fellow-men. That certain fearful looking for of judgment for human guilt, which is here constantly held up before the intellectual vision, and especially that renewal of the heart to holiness by divine influence, which so frequently follows the faithful preaching of the gospel, constitute the only adequate remedy for the wrong doings of this wicked world. What then would be the effect, if all the costs of crime in this land were consecrated to the diffusion and maintenance of the institutions of the gospel throughout the length and breadth of our country? Would not the nation be a gainer by it even in a pecuniary point of view, to say nothing of the improvement in morals and mental elevation—the certain consequence of obeying the truth?

You are all familiar with the fact, that pauperism, as the direct fruit of vice, is one of the public burdens; that England literally groans under the weight of this burden; that the property of the people is absorbed by taxation for the support of the poor; and that in this country, we have reason for the most fearful apprehensions from this source, unless we can

bring a reedeeming influence to bear upon it. To have seven-eighths of all the pauperism in the State of New York brought upon it by the single vice of intemperance, is enough to satisfy every sober man not only that something must be done to arrest the evil, but that the expense of this vice is greater than the means of prevention. Let all the children and youth in the land be brought under the appropriate influence of the Pulpit, and this vice will soon cease to exist, and the heavy burden which it now imposes on the nation will be removed. In this event, your prisons and penitentiaries will henceforth stand empty monuments of the depravity of a past age. For it is a well known fact that those who attend regularly on the public worship of God, seldom, if ever, become drunkards or criminals. And the reason is as obvious as the fact. It is, because men are here brought near to God, and the conviction of their personal responsibility to his law is constantly deepening. You feel a moral certainty, that men like Joseph and and Daniel, Paul and Cornelius, Wilberforce and Howard, men who uphold the institutions of religion, and whose hearts are controlled by the fear and love of God, will never become vicious and a burden to the community; while you are equally confident that men like Ahab and Haman, Judas and Simon Magus, men who hate the light and restraints of true religion, will be the sport of passion, and the prey of lust.

We say, then, that the vices and crimes which the Pulpit restrains, cost *more* than the restraining influence. This fact is indeed but little thought of by those who have been long accustomed to the ministrations of the Pulpit, because its conservative, health-giving influence, is as noiseless as that of the dew—the kingdom of God cometh not with observation. But wherever the experiment has been tried of living without the institutions of the gospel, there, in the immorality and crime which abound, it is seen and felt how much men are indebted for their highest *temporal* prosperity to the religion of Jesus Christ.

III. Again. The Pulpit is worth more than it costs, because it is the perequisite and support of civilization.

It is indeed true, that several nations, such as ancient Greece and Rome, attained great elevation and refinement without the aid of the gospel, but not to such a civilization as it is in the power of Christianity alone to impart and perpetuate.

The barbarous, or savage state, is that in which passion habitually predominates over reason—lust over conscience;—in which the animal, rather than the intellectual and moral, nature of man, is gratified. Now, when this order is reversed; where a people are governed by the decisions of an enlightened con-

science, there civilization in its best form exists; and what we affirm is, that such a condition is never reached and maintained without the gospel of Jesus Christ. The history of the Greenlanders presents an illustration in point. The missionaries to that country spent the first ten years after their arrival in attempting to elevate and civilize the people by the aid of literature and science alone, but the attempt was an utter failure. They then exhibited, with all the eloquence of fervid feeling, the doctrine of a Saviour, crucified for the sins of men —suffering, and dying to atone for the guilt of his enemies, with an effect, which more than realized their most sanguine expectations. The attention of the people was arrested, and the transformation of heart, which followed, laid the foundation for a permanent elevation. Will any one doubt whether the introduction of the gospel into Greenland, and the blessings which have followed in its train, are less valuable to the people than the expense incurred by the enterprise? Who, that properly understands the cruelties, the degradation, and the expense, attending the rites of Pagan superstition, can doubt? No. The civilization of the Greenlander, and his consequent redemption from the brutal ignorance and barbarism of his former state, are worth more to him for this life, than all the gold in the universe. Thus also schools among the Indians have failed to reclaim them from the savage state, except as they have been made subordinate to the instrumentality of the gospel. Such is the testimony of the missionaries themselves —such the result of actual experiment; and such a result we should be led to anticipate from the very nature of the case; for how can man rise to true refinement, so long as his heart is "the hold of every foul spirit, and the cage of every unclean and hateful bird?" How can sweetness of manners mark the intercourse of society, so long as ferocious passion is permitted to rage, and brutify the human mind, and put out the light, and hush the voice of reason and conscience?

But the Pulpit is not only the prerequisite of civilization, it is also indispensable for its support. Civilization cannot be maintained without the same influence in which it originated. The proof of this is seen in almost every town in Christendom; in men who have withdrawn, as far as possible, from the influence and support of the gospel; and the evidence in such cases is as palpable as it is painful, that they are rapidly reverting to the savage state. The roughness and vulgarity of their manners—the obtuseness of their moral perceptions and sensibilities—and the habitual predominance of appetite and lust over reason and conscience, proclaim with a loud voice, that the light of civilization in them is nearly extinguished; and that, but for surrounding restraints, arising from those who

maintain the institutions of the gospel, they would soon become downright barbarians. Such is the testimony of stubborn facts, known and read of all men, in regard to the necessity of the gospel in maintaining civilization, wherever it has gained a foothold in our world. By as much then as civilization is worth more than barbarism, by so much does the Christian Pulpit repay what it costs for its support.

IV. Assuming that mankind will have some kind of religion, an assumption which the history of our race justifies,) we say, fourthly, That the Protestant, evangelical Pulpit, is worth more than it costs, because it prevents the introduction of a more expensive, as well as a false religion.

A nation of Atheists, having no religion whatever, has never existed; nor can it exist, so long as man is in possession of his present faculties of moral agency. Some kind of religion is indispensable in order to meet the demands of his moral nature. And hence the question submitted to men is, not whether they shall have no religion at all, but whether it shall be true or false—Mahommedan or Jewish—Pagan or Christian. And here it is, that the religion of the gospel has the advantage over every other, not only on the ground of its truth and excellence, but as a matter of economy. For ministers enough of some order there will be; and the number will be in exact ratio to the ignorance of the people, and the corruption of religion. Infidelity has its priest in every man, who is sworn, by his talents and influence, to propagate the scheme. Paganism has its thousands of altars, and its array of priests to attend on every altar. In France, under the Roman Catholic Church, four hundred thousand, or one to every sixty-two of the inhabitants, are ecclesiastics. In Spain, one hundred and eighty thousand, or one to every sixty-one of the population, are supported by the church, while the Protestant religion deems one minister sufficient for every thousand souls. It is thus seen to be a matter of economy to maintain the evangelical Pulpit, not merely because it exhibits the only true religion, but because it is the cheapest,—demanding fewer ministers for its inculcation, and a far less expensive apparatus for worship. If men will have some kind of religion, as the entire history of the world demonstrates, it is better, on every account, to possess the religion of a regenerated heart—the religion of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

For these several reasons, therefore, are we not authorized to say, THAT THE PULPIT IS WORTH MORE THAN IT COSTS?

If, then, such be the legitimate fruits of a preached gospel, it is obvious to remark,

1. *That the Pulpit is not in debt to the people.*

By this I mean, that it pays back more than it costs in the increased value which it gives to every kind of useful property;—in the restraints which it imposes on vice and crime;—in the enterprise which it imparts, by introducing and perpetuating the purest form of civilization;—and in its preventing the introduction of a spurious, as well as a more expensive religion.

To say nothing of its connection with the eternal welfare of the soul, it is worth more than it costs for the good which it does—for the expense which it saves in the present life. Who can estimate the expense of time and treasure, devoted to the gratification of licentious passion—to that which is not bread—to that which satisfieth not? Who can tell the amount of money worse than wasted by Sabbath-breakers, drawing largely on the strength of the physical system, and cutting short a multitude of lives? Is it too much to say, that the money wasted in these ways is more than is now expended to supply the land with religious instruction—a waste occasioned altogether by breaking away from the salutary restraints of the gospel? And "to what purpose is this waste?" Are those, who expend money for sinful gratifications, happier, or more useful, than those who love the gospel, and, like David, regard one day spent in the courts of the Lord as better than a thousand in the tents of sin? No. For after tasting all the pleasures which sin can bestow, they are obliged at last to pronounce them vanity and vexation of spirit.

The influence of the Pulpit, then, on the temporal prosperity of men, is in the highest degree benign and salutary. The only losers, if any, in a pecuniary point of view, are the ministers themselves. Seldom, if ever, do they regain by preaching what their education, and the time devoted to this purpose, cost them. And if you add to this, what would probably have been the result of devoting themselves to some other profession, you will doubtless admit, that they have not gained, but lost, (so far as the acquisition of money is concerned,) by becoming the ministers of the Lord Jesus Christ. Certain it is, that they ordinarily pay a higher tax for the support of public worship than any two or three of their parishioners; for they give the interest of what their education cost them—the interest on fifteen hundred or two thousand dollars, and of what they might have earned during their eight or ten years of pre-

paratory study. But all this is comparatively nothing. To be permitted to preach the unsearchable riches of Jesus Christ—to be the instrument of fitting men for usefulness here, and for glory hereafter, is a privilege of greater value than all the wealth of earthly mine, and all the gems of every ocean cave. Thus much, however, seemed called for to relieve the Pulpit from the charge of receiving more benefits than it bestows. The gospel, my brethren, comes to men, not to beg, but to scatter blessings broadcast over every land. And it has demonstrated, by the multitude of its temporal blessings, that the money expended for the support of its institutions, is not only not wasted, but that it returns to the donors more than principal and interest.

2. Again. If the gospel is so indispensable to our highest temporal welfare, as the facts exhibited in this discourse warrent us to affirm, then the work of Home Missions is a work of self-preservation.

We have seen that vices and crimes will abound, and the light of civilization be extinguished, wherever the institutions of the gospel are abandoned, introducing pauperism and wretchedness, and false systems of religion; systems as expensive as they are false. The work of Home Missions, preventing all these evils, is, therefore, a work of self-preserving mercy. To take away the restraints of the gospel from our free institutions is to destroy their vitality—and to introduce corruption and licentiousness, and that pride which goeth before destruction. Let any man consult the history of nations with reference to the causes which led to the ruin of their prosperity, and he will see, that the first step in the process was, the removal of those restraints which keep the bad passions of the heart in subordination to reason and conscience. Rome might have stood to this day, gathering strength and glory and greatness from age to age, if all her citizens had been constantly animated by the spirit of Washington and Wilberforce; but yielding her confidence to such men as Cataline—men of lust and blood—she soon sunk under the weight of her vices and crimes. Every friend of his country, therefore, who perceives the connection between the purity of the public morals, and the preservation of free institutions, will bid God speed to the work of Home Missions, having for their object the establishment and maintenance, in every part of our country, of that religion, which has proved itself to be the great conservator of public morals, and free institutions.

This work will appear the more indispensable to our safety,

as a nation, when the statistics of our population are viewed in connection with the well known and well attested fact, that a strong moral influence, pervading all classes of society, is the mainspring of our prosperity.

The territory over which the United States extends its jurisdiction, is two-thirds as large as all Europe, and is one twenty-fifth part of the entire globe. We are accustomed to call New England large; but if you divide the United States into twenty-five portions, each of these portions is larger than all New England. Or if you represent the United States by a line of one hundred inches, the share that will fall to New England is four inches. This broad land is doubtless destined to be filled with a dense population of immortal beings. It has been computed, after a careful estimate of the capabilities of America, that with the present degree of knowledge, and without any reliance upon future discoveries in agriculture and the arts, this whole continent will sustain at least two thousand millions of inhabitants in circumstances of comfort. It has been ascertained, also, that our population doubles in every twenty-five years, and in the valley of the Mississippi in eleven years. But for the sake of coming certainly within the bounds of truth, let it be supposed, that the number doubles only in thirty years.

At this rate the population of this country in one hundred and seventy years from this time will be one thousand millions—two hundred millions more than the present population of the globe. In fifty years, the number will be fifty millions speaking the English language. In fifty years more, (when some of our grand children will be alive,) there will be two hundred millions, and in seventy years more one thousand millions! And who is not concerned to know what will be their character? What laws can hold them in restraint?—who can rule over them?—who will be safe to dwell among them?—and with what feelings must we lie down in our graves, and leave our children's children to have their inheritance among them, if they be actuated only by the unhallowed propensities of depraved humanity! The character and condition of this amazing mass of human beings must, according to the established laws of the Divine government, be more or less affected by the principles and conduct of the present generation. O, if there be any measure, which, if carried out, will save this vast population from the degradation of vice and crime, shall it not be adopted? And yet the institutions of the gospel, which it is the grand aim of Home Missions to establish in every waste place, will ensure, if cordially embraced, the safe-

ty of our country to the end of time; for righteousness exalteth a nation, and will render every institution, with which it is incorporated, as indestructible as itself!

Look too at the prospective physical and moral power of the Western States of this confederacy, and observe the bearings of the gospel of Jesus Christ on their *temporal* well being.

By the Western States, I mean those which are situated between the Alleghany and the Rocky Mountains, and are watered by the Mississippi and its tributaries. This territory contains five hundred and twenty-eight thousand square miles. It is only about sixty years since the first English settlements west of the Alleghany were made. Forty-five years ago, the entire white population of all those States amounted by actual computation, to scarcely one hundred and fifty thousand. Now they contain about five millions. Of their capability to sustain a population equal in density to that of Massachusetts, no doubt of course can be entertained. The number of persons to the square mile in Massachusetts, is seventy. By recurring to the number of square miles in the valley of the Mississippi, it will be seen, that with a population equal in density to what now exists in Massachusetts, this valley will sustain thirty-six millions nine hundred and sixty thousand inhabitants, giving it an effective military force of four millions—an army superior to that which can be brought into the field by the Autocrat of all the Russias!

Consider, also, their moral power.

When it is remembered that the Western States, according to the lowest estimate that can be made, are capable of sustaining a population of forty millions, we feel that their moral power must be great for good or evil, in proportion as intelligence or ignorance, virtue or vice, prevail among the people. It is said that at their present rate of increase, they will have, in 1850, a majority of the representatives in Congress; and it is well known, that the character of the representative will correspond with that of his constituents. "If the people are industrious and virtuous, their representatives will be men of like spirit. But if ignorance, licentiousness, and a disregard of all religious obligation prevail in the community, then reckless demagogues and loud disunionists, and abandoned profligates, will sit in the sacred halls of legislation, and ambition and self-aggrandizement and love of power will take the place of patriotism and public spirit, and an unshaken attachment to

the best interests of the nation. In such a state of society, the elective franchise, which is the peculiar glory of America, will become one of its deadliest scourges."

It should be remembered, also, that if the population of this country should become generally corrupt, they cannot be governed, like men of the same character in other countries. In Spain, for instance, the government is able, by a standing army, by racks, dungeons and spies, and by disarming the common people, to preserve some kind of public order. The people are prepared for this, having been transformed into beasts of burden by superstition, and the domination of the privileged orders. But should the people of the United States generally cast off all religious restraints, and become licentious in their morals, who does not see that, with the sole power of government in their own hands, they would be beyond all control, and that wickedness and violence would reign with tremendous and indomitable energy?

I ask now what remedy there is for this state of things—what means of preventing this frightful state of society, but the preaching of the gospel with the Holy Ghost sent down from Heaven? Constitutions and statute-books are but a dead letter, before a corrupt public sentiment. Not a law of our land, however wise, however essential to the public weal, can be executed, unless the people wish to have it. And what can make them wish to have laws executed, which impose restraints upon their corrupt inclinations, but the power of the gospel? The reason why the people of this country have been so easily governed under free institutions, in past time, is to be found in the fact, that the truth of God—the power of the world to come, exerted so extensively its influence on their hearts. It is to be found in the history of Plymoth rock—in the principles of the Pilgrims, and in the institutions which they established to bless their posterity. And just in proportion as we recede from these influences, our constitutions and our laws become as ropes of sand, and the roaring of the cataract, as we approach it, admonishes us of our doom.

Can it be doubted, that the purest morality, and the most healthy public sentiment, found in this country, exist in connection with the ordinances of religion? or that, if every man had the spirit of Paul, and the heart of every woman were opened, like that of Lydia, to the impressions of divine truth; and every child, like young Timothy, were trained according to the principles of the Bible, our country would be in a vastly

more prosperous condition in this world even, than if the people should generly ask, like Pharoah, "who is the Lord, that we should obey him?" Can there be a doubt on this point in the mind of any sober man?

We say, then, that the work of Home Missions, having for its object the establishment of churches, and the ministry of the gospel, in every waste place throughout the land, is a work of self-preservation. Let an uncorrupted Christianity, with all its institutions and ordinances, with all its restraints and encouragements, go forth with the tide of population that is so fast overflowing the land, and however vast and extensive that tide may be, the light of education will be everywhere diffused, and social order will be preserved, and rights will be respected, and law will be obeyed, and the hands of government will be made strong, and the blessings of civil liberty will be enjoyed in all their richness, and will be transmitted inviolate to coming generations. But these results can be secured by nothing but the gospel; and the gospel unadulterated, and everywhere diffused, and accompanied with the demonstration of the Spirit and with power. We are called to engage in this work, then, by the testimony of all past history, and by the voice of God in his word and providence, as the only efficient means of promoting and perpetuating our individual and national prosperity. For, to use the language of another, "unless the salt contained in Christian institutions can be diffused through the land, the mass will putrify,"—"let the Sabbath Schools, then, and the Bible classes of our country, be multiplied; and let societies for domestic missions rise in every state and district, to collect and pour out the energies of the people for their preservation, while Bibles and pastors and teachers are multiplied till the knowledge of the Lord covers the land, and his saving health is extended to all the people."

And let these instrumentalities, in which, under God, is all our hope, be employed without delay. The disease is preying upon our vitals, and the remedy cannot be applied too soon. Those vices which impoverish a nation,—that infidelity which bids defiance to control,—and that false religion which prepares the way for the iron rod of despotism, are already at work; and, unless speedily counteracted by the energies of the church, and the mighty powes of God, will stamp upon generation after generation their character and their doom. Our country is yet in its youth, and it may now be moulded by the power of truth, and of motives drawn from the world to come. But let it grow up to manhood, unrestrained, unhallowed by

the Sabbath and the sanctuary, and the Spirit of God, and the day of its merciful visitation may be past, and the things of its prosperity, and of its peace be hidden for ever from our eyes. O, let us see to it, then, that we come not with our remedy too late! Now is the accepted time,—NOW the day of salvation!

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SERMON CCLXXIV.

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FRUITFULNESS IN OLD AGE.

Psalm 92 : 14.—"*They shall still bring forth fruit in old age.*"

There are two events before us, which no skill or power of men can avoid. *They are old age and death.* All of us are advancing towards them by a steady and irresistible progress. By night and by day, we are traveling on, through the successive stages of life ; nor can we stop a single moment on the road that is conducting us and all mankind down the scale of years, to the affecting termination of our earthly being in the grave and eternity.

We may indeed be cut off in the midst of our days, and thus be snatched away from the infirmities and trials of declining years ; but if life is spared, we shall all very soon reach the period of old age ; and when arrived at that period, the next step brings us to death and the house appointed for all the living.

But though these events cannot be avoided, much may be done to mitigate or remove the evils connected with them, and to render ourselves useful and happy even down to old age and death.

Plants and trees are necessarily deprived of their fruitfulness by age, and are left to decay, or are cut down as useless encumbrances of the ground. The same is true of animals. They grow, come to maturity, decay, and die. The same also is true of multitudes of men, who, more resembling vegetables or animals, than rational beings, live only for the present moment ; and having spent their little hour of being and enjoyment in this passing scene, decay like the leaves of autumn, and fall, soon to be forgotten, as if they had never been.

Not so the persons spoken of in our text. They shall bring forth fruit in old age. These are they, who, in the context, are denominated the righteous—they are like to the palm-tree, that

is always green—to the cedars of Lebanon, that are always flourishing; they are said to be planted in the house of the Lord, and as a consequence, they flourish in the courts of God. Nature may decay, but grace thrives still, putting forth fresh blossoms and bearing fruits even amid the storms and frosts of the winter of life.

My object in the present discourse is to mention several things which are necessary to fruitfulness in old age, and then urge some considerations which should engage us to live in such a manner as to bring forth fruit in old age, should it please God to spare our lives till that period.

1. The first thing then which I mention as necessary to fruitfulness in old age, is a well regulated childhood and youth.

The young are, in general, but little aware of the inestimable value of their early days, nor do they realize in any measure as they ought, while they tread the giddy round of pleasure or trifle away the golden hours of youth in neglect of God and their souls, that they are forming the habits and fixing the character of their future years. They know not that, in a course of dissipation or vain amusements, they are training up for a useless life, a wretched old age, and a miserable eternity.

Such, however, is the fact. There is a very close connection between a misspent youth and a fruitless old age. The grace of God may indeed interpose to break this connection, and save the subject from shame and ruin. But even when this is the case, the unhappy effects of early misconduct remain through life, and greatly diminish the fruitfulness of suqsequent years. John Newton was a dissipated and wicked youth; and though, by the grace of God, he was snatched as a brand from the burning, he felt till his dying day the unhappy consequences of the habits he formed in early life. The same is true of all who spend the morning of their days in estrangement from God and neglect of duty. The habits then contracted cleave to them as a second nature, and are a great impediment in the way of a useful and happy life.

Our earliest are, unquestionably, our most important days. They are the spring season, the seed-time of life and eternity,—the period when the appetites and passions are to be subjected to the higher principles of reason and virtue; when the mind and heart are to be cultivated and improved; and when, if ever, are to be formed the germs, at least, of those intellectual and moral habits which impart worth to the character and dignity and usefulness to future years. If the morning of life is neglected or misimproved, the loss is irreparable. It is like a frost in spring or a drought in summer. The one destroys the opening blossoms, the other the ripening fruits; and either cuts off all hope of a plentiful harvest. An apocryphal writer says: "If thou hast gathered nothing in thy youth, how canst thou find any thing in thine age?"

What a young man is at fifteen or twenty years of age, that he is likely to be in the leading traits of his character through life. If you see one in that tender, forming age, careful of his time and diligent in the improvement of his mind and heart; if you see him remembering God his Creator, consecrating to him the dew of his youth, and coming forward upon the stage of action under the influence of correct moral and religious habits, you see one who, having been planted in the house of the Lord, will flourish in the courts of his God. The seed sowed in his youth will spring up in age, and bear fruit unto eternal life.

On the other hand, if you see a youth improvident of his time and neglectful of his habits; if you see him breaking away from the restraints of religion, throwing from him the counsels of his parents, and indulging in vicious courses, you need be at no loss to predict his future character. He is forming habits which he will probably retain through life, and which will render him not only a useless member of society, but a burden both to himself and fellowmen in the decline of age.

2. Perseverence in the means of promoting usefulness through every successive period of life is another thing essential to fruitfulness in old age.

We see many young persons setting out in life with every flattering prospect of success, who entirely disappoint the hopes of their friends, and sink into a state of comparative insignificance and uselessness. The reason is, they want perseverance. They have not energy of character to endure the self-denial and toil which are necessary to enable them to rise in the world, and carry them forward in a course of well-doing. They are unstable of purpose, fluctuating in effort, acting without plan, without aim; now pursuing this, and now that, till, discouraged by want of success, they give over exertion, fall into habits of indolence, often of vice, lose their respectability and influence in society, and finally sink into obscurity and neglect.

It is the appointment of Providence that nothing great or good can be obtained without perseverance. It matters not what may have been your advantages in youth, nor how accomplished your education, nor how splendid your talents, nor how varied your attainments, nor how flattering your prospects; all will not avail to render old age useful and happy without continued effort. Industry and economy, for a few hours in a morning will not atone for idleness and prodigality the rest of the day. The fairest setting out will not suffice to secure success without patient continuance in well-doing. The tendency of human nature is downward; and nothing can keep us in course of improvement, but unremitted and unwearied exertion. The moment we cease to make effort to rise and go forward, we begin to sink and go backward. There is no point where we can stop or fold our hands in slothful ease, without diminishing proportionably our usefulness and happiness in the decline of life.

There is another fact to be kept in mind. *It is much easier to lose a character than it is to acquire one.* Virtuous influence, *usefulness*, is a plant of slow growth. It requires much time and the most careful cultivation to bring it to any good degree of perfection. *But a single stroke in a single minute can destroy it.* One misstep has often ruined the reputation of a long life, and rendered the subject of it wretched and useless the remainder of his days. Esteem is lost, confidence is destroyed; and when these are gone, no man can be either useful or happy. Fruitfulness in old age, then, demands not only *persevering* exertion, but habitual *watchfulness*, lest in some unguarded hour the tempter seduce the heart from the ways of virtue and uprightness, and thus blast the character and destroy the usefulness and peace of future life.

3. In order to bring forth fruit in old age, it is necessary that we keep up with the spirit and improvement of the times in which we live. If we would be useful in our day and generation, we must move on with the progress of things, and keep up an acquaintance with what is going on in the world. If we neglect this, we shall soon fall behind the advancing spirit of the times, and feel ourselves to be strangers in the world to which God has called us to live and act for the glory of his name and the good of our fellow men.

Let a man in this active, stirring age fall asleep, and remain in that state five or ten years, and then wake up, and he would scarcely know where he was or what he had to do. He would be in a new world; and for want of sympathy and fellowship with the living, active beings around him, would feel himself entirely disqualified to enter into their designs or unite with them in any plans of general improvement.

Not unlike this must be our condition, if we cherish not in ourselves the spirit of the age to which we belong, and move not with the moving world around us. If we stop or quit our post only a short time, we are left in the rear, and must pursue the remainder of our journey alone. Stereotyped habits of feeling and thought are not in keeping with the spirit of the age. If we retire from the scene of action; if, through attachment to former days or dislike of innovation and change, we refuse to go forward in our habits of feeling, and thinking, and acting with the advancement of public sentiment and the progress of events, we must cease to be useful, because we shall cease to have any sympathy or fellow-feeling with the agents who are at work around us.

It is owing to a defect in this particular that some ministers, and not a few professing christians, manifest a strange indifference to the benevolent operations which distinguish our day. And what is worse, we sometimes see persons of this description looking with an evil eye upon those operations and opposing them as useless, if not hurtful innovations upon that order of things to which they have been accustomed. The reason is, they have not kept up with the spirit of the times; they have fallen behind the

age in which they live, and in their habits of feeling and acting belong to a generation that has passed away.

There is another thing to be noticed in this connection, As aged people perceive the infirmities of years coming upon them, they usually feel a growing reluctance to every thing that requires activity and labor. Their feelings are like those of a man who is chilled through with the cold ; they are inclined to lie down and repose. But the consequence of yielding is fatal. The reluctance to activity increases by indulgence, and is soon succeeded by a torper both of body and mind, from which nothing can rouse them. It is far wiser to keep the mind, and the heart, and the hands actively employed in our Master's work till the last. Many aged people have I known, who, by a sort of inherent energy or force of character, have kept off for years the infirmities of age, and by exerting themselves to keep up with the spirit of the times, have continued to shine as lights in the world even till the going down of their sun.*

4. Another thing essential to fruitfulness in old age is to guard against the faults that are incident to that time of life. If the aged are less exposed than the young to the sins of vain mirth, and loose desires, and irregular appetites and passions ; or if they are less exposed than the middle-aged to the sins of ambition, and pride, and worldly aggrandizement : they are more exposed than either to be querrulous, impatient, discontented ; to be suspicious, jealous, and vainly fearful of neglect and want. They are also much exposed to be disatisfied with the present generation and the present state of things, and to speak of the former days as better than these ; and while they have but little fellowship with what is passing around them, they are very apt to be obstinate and self-willed ; to be distrustful and jealous of those who are coming upon the stage of action after them ; and what is still more surprising, to be much addicted to the sin of covetousness, when nearest to the end of their days.

Covetousness is styled by the Apostle the root of all evil ; and as the "root in winter retains the sap, when the branches have lost their leaves and verdure ; so in old age, the winter of life, covetousness preserves its vigor when other vices have disappeared." Strange as it may seem, when men are about to leave the world, they often cling fastest to it ; and at the sun-set of life, are careful and troubled about many things, providing for a long day. Andrew Fuller explains the fact by saying, "The lust of the flesh has nearly spent its force, the pride of life has lost its charms ;

* A remark of Dr. Rice, in his life, page 366. There are two errors to which aged men are exposed. One is, of holding on, and refusing to admit that they are old. The other is precisely opposite. It is allowing themselves to grow old, *prematurely* Failing to exercise their faculties, they become rusty. and move like an old door whose hinges are never oiled. I have no doubt about the fact, that when the organs through which the mind acts, fail. mental imbecility ensues. But I am equally certain, that ceasing to exert our faculties greatly impairs their strength. And I am convinced that when a man, whose life has been very active, retires, he very soon sinks into a *second dotage.*

depravity therefore has only one channel left, the lust of the eye; and this commonly flows deeper and stronger as years multiply and the infirmities of age increase." I once knew a man sick of a consumption and nigh unto death, who, on learning from a friend that bank stock had risen, of which he possessed a large amount, brightened up and exclaimed with great animation, "I can now die in peace." Poor man, he did die in less than a week after, and went to his own place. The spirit of covetousness, especially if it has by indulgence grown into a bad habit, is singularly tenacious in old age, and is emphatically a passion "strong in death."

5. The last thing I shall mention as essential to a fruitful old age, is to exercise the appropriate virtues of that period of life. The chief of these I find specified by the Apostle in his Epistle to Titus,—"Speak thou the things that become sound doctrine, —that the aged be sober, grave, temperate, sound in the faith, in charity, in patience." The sobriety and gravity here recommended are not opposed to cheerfulness, but to levity and trifling. They denote that calm, collected, considerate frame of mind and propriety of deportment which are at once the duty and the ornament of age. Retiring from scenes of gayety and mirth, and from the noise and vanities of the world, the aged should have their minds much occupied with heavenly contemplations; should have their affections and thoughts raised above the world and fixed on those invisible scenes which are so soon to open to their view in eternity.

The temperance, too, which is enjoined, does not relate merely to moderation in eating and drinking, but to all the occupations and possessions of life. The connection of the aged with the world being so soon to terminate, they should withdraw their hearts from its riches and honors, from its pleasures and vain pursuits, and have all their designs and hopes tempered by a serious regard to the close of life, and the affecting change they are so soon to pass.

They are also required to be sound in the faith. Light, superficial views of religious truth may suffice to keep the mind in quietness and hope in the season of health and vigor, but not when strength declines, and death and eternity are just at hand. If, when the ways are broken up, and the floods are pouring in, and you feel you must go hence, to be seen here no more, you are found unsound in the faith, unsettled and wavering in the great doctrines of the Gospel, you will be without any foundation on which to rest your soul, all around and beneath will be giving way, and you will be obliged to plunge into eternity in awful darkness and apprehension as to what is before you.

On the other hand, if you have soundness in the faith, clear and settled views of the great principles of religion, and of the *way of* salvation by Christ, you will feel calm and sustained amid *the decays of* nature and the scenes of approaching death; your

light, like the setting sun at the close of a long, clear, summer's day, will appear full-orbed and bright, shedding a soft and cheerful lustre upon all around; and when sunk beneath the horizon, will leave behind the precious assurance of a glorious rising in the morning of the last day.

Charity is another virtue enjoined upon the aged. Instead of holding their property in the grasp of a miserly, hoarding spirit, they should scatter it with a liberal hand; using it for God and the good of their fellow-men, and thus "lay up for themselves a good foundation against the time to come." Conscious of the account which they are soon to render of their stewardship, they should abound in works of beneficence, in all the offices of piety towards God, and charity towards men. As the time of their departure draws near, they should, like the blessed Saviour, feel an increasing interest in all about them, especially in the young and rising generation, and should impart to them those counsels of wisdom and love which their age and experience qualify them to administer with peculiar impressiveness and effect.

The aged are very apt to lose an interest in the young. This is a great error. One ought to bind himself, in affection and sympathy, as long and as closely as possible to the younger classes of society, not only that he may be useful to them, by imparting to them the results of his observations and experience, but also that, by mingling his associations and feelings with theirs, he may keep up the activity and freshness of youthful days; avoid the feeling of loneliness which age is apt to bring along with it, and thus prolong both his happiness and usefulness as he goes down the hill of life.

A spirit of meekness and submission is another virtue appropriate to the aged. Such a spirit is most needful amid the pains and infirmities of declining years; and is to be expected as the proper fruit of their long experience and the many trials they have had to pass through in making the journey of life. Trials, indeed, when unsanctified, usually beget discontent and peevishness of temper; but when sanctified, patience and submission. Many aged christians have I known who have been softened and mellowed by their trials; and under their influence have acquired a spirit of unruffled meekness and gentleness. If the aged have accustomed themselves to the government of their passions, to self-denial and resignation under the adversities of life, it will be easy for them to manifest this necessary and amiable disposition when the evil days come, and the years draw nigh when they can have no pleasure in them.

Weanedness from the world, and a patient waiting for the coming of their Lord, is another virtue which should adorn the aged. As their time on earth is just drawing to a close, they should feel that they are strangers and pilgrims here below, and should be ready to leave this earthly scene at any hour when God may see fit to call for them. They should think much of the end of their

journey, and of their everlasting home. It should be seen in their conversation, in their employments, in their prayers, in their spirit and whole demeanor, from day to day; that they view themselves as near their home, and are fast ripening to be removed to their Father's house in heaven. And while their loins should be girded about, and their lamps trimmed and burning, ready for the summons to go forth to meet their Lord, their exhortations to others, to their families, their neighbors, and friends, should be frequent and serious, as becometh those who are about to bid adieu to earth, and go home to be seen here no more. Their prayers, when cut off from other means of usefulness, should daily be poured forth for the piety and happiness of their families, of the church, of the world. And when the closing scene shall arrive, and they feel themselves sinking under disease, added to the infirmities of age, they should remember in whom they have believed, and strengthen their confidence in the rock of their salvation. While flesh and heart are failing, they should remember Him who is the strength of their heart and ther never-failing portion, and say with the Psalmist, as they close their eyes on earthly scenes: "Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me." O how happy, how useful a life thus spent and thus closed!

PART II.—MOTIVES TO FRUITFULNESS IN OLD AGE.

1. The first I shall mention are the guilt and misery of an unfruitful old age. There is not in this lower world a more pitiable object than an old man or woman, who has passed sixty or seventy years in the vineyard of God, and has yet brought forth no fruit to the glory of His name. All that time he has been under the cultivation of the providence, the word and the Spirit of God. The rains and the dews of heaven have descended upon him; the sun has poured around him its light and heat; plants of righteousness have sprung up and flourished by his side, and been transplanted to the paradise above: but he, like the barren fig-tree, has remained unfruitful, bearing nothing but leaves; and now, perhaps, under the curse of the great Master of the vineyard, is about to be cut down as a cumberer of the ground. What must be the reflections of such a man as he casts an eye over his past life, all barren and unfruitful as it is? Days, and months, and years, have rolled over him only to witness his unfruitfulness, and ripen him for ruin. The goodness and forbearance of God, which should have led him to repentance, have only increased his impenitence and hardness of heart. The calls and invitations of mercy repeated to him more than half a century, have left him still in his sins, unpardoned, unsaved. Changes, and trials, and deaths, that have daily occurred around him, have only served to make him more unmindful of his own approach-

ing end, and of the awful scenes before him. He has lived to bury all the world around him ; himself spared by the kindness of a God waiting to be gracious, and yet forgetful of the hand that has spared him, and, like an empty vine, bringing forth fruit only to himself. Standing now on the borders of the eternal world, with all these painful recollections of the past pressing upon him, what are his present sources of consolation and support? He has none. Riches he may have heaped up ; and, perhaps, too, he has heirs who are wishing him gone, that they may seize upon his estates, and divide them among themselves. But suppose him to be in the quiet possession of his wealth, what can that do for him now that age has palsied his faculties, and death stands at the door to remove him to eternity? Honored, too, he may have been by man, but the proudest laurels are withered by the frosts of age ; and even in their freshest bloom can afford no support to the soul about to quit its earthly dwelling to appear before God. Friends he may have, but friends cannot ease the pains of decaying nature, nor delay, for an hour, his descent to the cold and silent grave. And if the past and the present are so vacant of comfort, what must be his prospects of the future? His strength departing, his senses blunted, his faculties impaired, his capacities for enjoyment failing, his early friends and companions gone, life stripped of its pleasures, cold, cheerless, sinking in rapid and irreparable decay ; neglected by the world, abandoned, it may be, of God, his day of grace gone, he stands like a deserted cottage, through which the winds of winter are whistling, and shaking it into ruins ; or like an aged, lonely forest tree, smitten by the bolt of heaven, withered, dead, falling to decay. When he looks to the past, all is vanity and a dream ; when he looks to the present, all is emptiness and guilt ; when he looks to the future, all is darkness and gloom. A few days, and he knows he shall be gone from earth, and be an inhabitant of the world of spirits. And what adds to the gloominess of this near prospect of death is, the almost entire certainty that he will die as he has lived, an unfruitful, unholy subject of God's government. The Ethiopian is not likely to change his skin, nor the leopard his spots. I will not dwell longer on this painful subject: but if you, my friends, would not realize in your own persons this picture of guilt and wretchedness, see to it that you come not to old age in the unfruitfulness of a life spent in estrangement from God. See to it that you devote your earliest and best days to his service, and provide for yourselves, in a life of piety and usefulness, a good foundation against the time of need.

2. The beauty, the dignity, and the happiness of a fruitful old age, should make the attainment of it an object of the warmest desire and the most unwearied exertion to every living man. There is not a more interesting object on earth than an *old disciple*, who has been bringing forth fruit to the glory of his Saviour during a long life, and who, when about to be removed to a purer

and brighter climate, is still seen putting forth fresh blossoms, and bearing fruits of righteousness. Upon such an one the eye rests with peculiar satisfaction. He stands forth as a monument of the loving-kindness and faithfulness of God—of the excellence and worth of religion; reflecting in his own bright virtues the image of his Redeemer, giving evidence in his life to all around, that he is an heir of heaven, and guiding, by his example, his fellow-travelers in the way to the paradise above. His hoary head is a crown of glory, being found in the way of righteousness. As he draws nearer the world of light, his countenance gathers brightness, as did that of Moses when he had been conversing with God on the Mount: and though his earthly comforts may be torn from him by the rude hand of time or the rough blasts of adversity, his all-sufficient, his ever-abiding happiness still remains. He still stands, like the glory of the forest, stript indeed of his summer foliage, but discovering more clearly to every observing eye, his solid strength and substantial texture. How charming, my brethren, to see grace thrive when nature decays; the mind soar when the body bows; the venerable saint waiting, like good old Simeon, for his departure; or, like Paul, the aged, uttering, with tremulous but affecting accents, the language of holy confidence: "I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight; I have finished my course; I have kept the faith: henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at his appearing?" O, compared with such a sight, how does all the pride of greatness, all the pomp and pageantry of earth, sink into insignificance and nothing. How is God glorified; how is religion honored; how are the faith and the hopes of surviving Christians strengthened and confirmed by such a life, by such a death of an aged servant of Christ! How consoling must be the reflection of such an one on the past; how delightful his meditations on the present; how cheering, how glorious his anticipations of the future? When he looks back, and remembers the way in which the Lord his God has led him, how many refreshing recollections will be called to mind; how many seasons of communion with God; how many tokens of his loving-kindness and tender mercy; how many days and years of pious service performed for his divine Master and the happiness of his fellow-men! All these come home as a reviving cordial to his spirit, now that he is retiring from the field of action, laden with the honors of victory, and about to receive the plaudits of the great Lord whom he has served. God, his almighty Saviour and friend, comes forth to sustain him by his gracious presence, now when heart and flesh are failing; and while he feels underneath him the everlasting arms, and daily refreshes his spirits at those daily fountains that are provided for pilgrims in this dry and thirsty land, the prospects that open before him of heavenly blessedness fill him with joy unspeakable

and full of glory—his journey almost ended; his trials almost over; heaven just at hand; himself ripe for glory, and about to take possession of the promised inheritance, to become a pillar in the temple of God, to go no more out for ever. He dies; and a heavenly light cheers his departing moments. His friends look on, as he takes his upward flight, and are quickened and comforted by the remembrances of his virtues, by the sight of his triumphs, by the assurance that he is gone to be eternally present with the Lord.

Such is the dignity, such the happiness of a fruitful old age. Ought it not, then, to be an object of our warmest desires and most unwearied exertions? What so worthy to engage our affections, our prayers, our efforts, as that fruitfulness in age, which will enable us to close life with honor, with usefulness, with joyful hope of everlasting happiness in heaven?

3. Fruitfulness in old age is the best possible preparation for a peaceful and happy death. The Scriptures describe the last hours of many of the aged servants of God, and uniformly represent them as meeting death with peace and tranquility of mind. The patriarch Jacob on his dying bed could say—"I have waited for thy salvation, O Lord," and then, quietly yielding up the ghost, was gathered to his people. David, having served his own generation by the will of God, fell on sleep,—a phrase often used in Scripture to denote the peaceful death of the righteous. Aged Simeon had long been waiting for the salvation of God, and when he had clasped the infant Saviour in his arms, he earnestly desired to depart and be at rest. Stephen, and Paul, and John, after a long and useful life, died in the triumphs of faith and hope. Nor are such examples confined to Scripture characters. Holy Richard Baxter, when asked, just before he expired, how he did, answered, "Almost well." Eliot, styled the apostle of the Indians, said to a friend not long before his death, "My understanding faileth, my memory faileth, and my hand and pen fail, but my charity faileth not." He closed a long life of eminent piety and usefulness with the words on his lips, "Welcome joy; pray, pray, pray." Of the venerable missionary Swartz it is recorded that about ten minutes before his death he closed his eyes; and his friend Jaeniche, who was watching by his bed-side, supposing that he had expired, began to sing his favorite hymn, and had gone through the first verse, when, on commencing the second, the good old missionary, as if called back to life by the sound of praise, accompanied him with an audible voice, and actually finished the hymn before he breathed his last. And one there was who died in this place, known and dear to some of you, who, after having forgotten his children and nearest earthly friends, on being asked in the hour of approaching death, whether he remembered the Lord Jesus Christ, replied, his eyes brightening in hope, "Oh yes, I do, I do; I remember the Lord Jesus Christ; he is my Lord and my God, by whom I hope to be saved."

Such, it may be affirmed, is the usual manner in which aged Christians of devoted piety and usefulness, leave the world. Their fruitfulness in old age is the best possible evidence, to themselves and others, that they have been planted in the house of the Lord, and are destined to flourish forever in the courts of their God.

Having borne the heat and burden of the day as faithful servants of Christ, they are privileged to retire from the field of action, bearing the honors of victory and rejoicing in hope of eternal glory. Death has to them lost its sting, and the grave its terrors. They are ripe for the last change, and are ripe for heaven. As they come to the evening of their days, laden with the fruits of righteousness, God comes forth to acknowledge them as his own; he pours around them the refreshings of his presence; gives them sweet foretastes of the promised rest, now so near at hand, and enables them to sing, as they enter the dark valley—The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want; I know in whom I have believed; I am in a strait betwixt two. O, to be able to meet death in such a frame; how sustaining to the soul, how honorable to religion, how glorifying to the God of salvation!

4. Fruitfulness in old age is recommended, not only by its being the highest happiness of declining life, and the best preparation for a peaceful death, but also by the rewards by which it will be distinguished in heaven, It is the doctrine of the Scriptures that the righteous shall be recompensed at the resurrection of the just, in proportion to their fidelity and usefulness in this state of probation. As grace abounded in turning their feet into the path of life, and fitting them for usefulness, so grace will abound in bestowing upon them, at least, a rich reward, even for so small a gift as that of a cup of cold water conferred upon a needy disciple of the Saviour. All their patience and submission under the trials of life; all their soundness in the faith and zeal in maintaining the truth and the worship of God; all their self-denial and deeds of charity; all their prayers and pious services for the glory of Christ and the welfare of their fellow-men, are *now* registered in the gracious remembrance of their Saviour, and will be acknowledged by him at the last day, when he shall say to them, "Come, ye blessed of my father; inherit the kingdom prepared for you before the foundation of the world."

In the conclusion of this discourse, I am led to remark, 1. That long life is a great and distinguishing blessing. It was a kind promise which God made to Abraham, that he should go to his fathers in peace, and be buried in a *good old age*. And it is promised, as a distinguishing favor to those who sincerely love and serve God, that he will satisfy them *with long life*, and show them his salvation. It was esteemed a mark of divine favor, in the days of Job, to come to the grave in a full age, like as a shock of corn fully ripe. And what wise and good man would not wish thus to live and thus to die? How desirable is life, protracted to old age, if it be spent, as it may and ought to be, in bringing

forth fruit to the glory of God, in accumulating treasures in heaven, and in preparing ourselves and others for a more exceeding and eternal weight of glory in the kingdom of our Father? The aged, I know, are apt to think that they are no longer of any use in the world; that their poor remains of life are hardly worth retaining. But if it be so, the fault is their own. In preserving your lives, my friends, while multitudes younger than you have fallen on the right hand and on the left, God is bestowing upon you a distinguishing favor, and you are called upon to improve it to the honor of his name and your own immortal well-being. There is no period in your existence so valuable to yourselves as the present life. While you are continued here, faithfully performing the duties of your respective stations, you have an opportunity to honor your Saviour, to promote the salvation of your fellow-men, and enhance the glory of your immortal reward in heaven. How precious, then, every hour, every day, every year added to your lives? How grateful should the aged be, that whilst most of the companions of their youth have been called from the stage of action to their final account, they are yet spared in the vineyard of their Lord, and may still bring forth fruit which shall redound to the glory of his name and their own eternal happiness! And how should it quicken them in duty, and keep them dilligent in their Master's work, even till the going down of their sun, to reflect that their sands are almost run; that their day of service is just at an end, and that a step before them lies eternity, and the glories of eternity as their reward, if found faithful unto death!

2. The young, and those in the meridian of life, ought to have a serious reference to old age in all their occupations and pursuits. It is an event which cannot be avoided. With a rapidity of which we take but little notice, we are hurrying through the different stages of our earthly being, and ere we are aware, we shall be travelling down the vale of tears, drawing near to the grave and eternity. It is certain, indeed, that many of us, who are now in the vigor of life, shall never be old, but die and go hence long before that period arrives. Still, if life is spared, we shall soon feel the decays of age coming over us, and be bending under the weight of declining years. What, then, does wisdom, what does duty require of us? Is it not that we look to the future, and prepare for a scene so solemn, so interesting, so unavoidable, and so near? Ought we not, at every stage of life, to think seriously of its end; to live and act in such a manner as is adapted to render old age comfortable and useful, dignified and honorable? And how is this to be done? Not by spending the morning of life in pleasure and amusement; not by neglecting the mind and the heart in chase of the vanities of earth and time; not by living to ourselves—devoting the strength of manhood to schemes of wealth and worldly aggrandizement, while God and religion are left unheeded. No, my

friends, these things, however common, are thorns in the pillow of age—sources of shame and sorrow, and fearful bodings, as one draws towards the close of life. Old age, to be useful and happy, must be preceded by a well-regulated life ; a life of virtue and piety; of devotedness to the glory of God and the good of men. Is it not that the morning of our days, the spring season of our being, should be consecrated to the service of Him who made us, and, through every successive period of life, his grace should be sought and his will obeyed; and with one, who, though long since dead, yet liveth, we should resolve in every situation, "to do whatever is best adapted to promote the glory of God, or our own highest good, whether it be now, or never so many myriads of ages hence?" There should be no break between one portion of our being and another. It should all come under the influence of the fear and love of God. Youth should be a preparation for middle age, middle age should be a preparation for old age, and all should be a preparation for eternity. Living and acting thus, the decline of life would find us laden with the fruits of righteousness, ready to be transplanted to the paradise above to flourish there forever.

Let me press this view of the subject upon those of my hearers who are yet in the morning and meridian of life. Little as you may think of it, my friends, there is a very close connection between what you now are and are doing, and your character and condition in future years. You are now preparing the cup and spreading the couch of your declining age ; yea, and for eternity also. The seed which you now sow is for both worlds. The habits you are now forming will probably go with you to the close of life; will form the dying dress of the soul, in which it shall come forth at last to receive the sentence of its Judge. What, then, are the prospects of some in this assembly? Is there not fearful evidence that some of you are preparing for yourselves a fruitless and joyless evening of life and a miserable eternity? How many of the young are forgetting God, their Creator ; neglecting the Saviour of their souls, wasting the precious season of youth in folly and sin, and preparing for themselves a cup of trembling in the close of life?

How many, too, of the middle-aged now before me, are living without hope and without God in the world ; putting from them the claims of religion, and choosing their portion in the things of earth and sense? What are you expecting, my friends? To live here always ; never to grow old, never to die? How will your present manner of life appear to you a few years hence, when age shall bring you to the borders of the grave, and death shall bid you look forth upon the eternity for which you have made no preparation? Does that time seem distant? How old are you? Have you lived thirty or forty years in the world? Then have you lived to bury one entire generation of your fellow-men, and have already entered upon the last half of life. Thirty, forty years,

have you lived in this world of misery, and yet are irreligious men, are impenitent, prayerless men, unprepared to die, and making calculations only for the world and time! How great, then, your guilt, and how gloomy your prospects for the future! The suns of thirty, of forty years have revolved over you only to witness your neglect of God and the soul, and to light your steps in the way to death and a neglected eternity! O, ye who are in the vigor of your age, busied incessantly in this world's pursuits, beware lest the world cheat you of salvation, and you be left to lie down for ever amid the poverty of hell. Look to the scenes that are but just before you, and prepare to meet them. Make God your refuge and eternal life your portion, before the evil days come and the years draw nigh when you shall say, I have no pleasure in them.

3. Our subject presents, in an affecting light, the peculiar excellence of true religion. It is a treasure that never fails, a principle that thrives and grows when every thing else decays and dies. It is beautifully described by our Saviour as a well of water, springing up into everlasting life. It is an unfailing source of blessedness to all in whom it dwells. Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall; but they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run and not be weary; they shall walk and not be faint. While the outward man decays, the inward man is renewed day by day. While the body bows, the spirit soars, while the earthly house is falling to decay, the soul looks out with brightening hope, and rejoices to behold a house prepared for it, not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. When stripped of all earthly things, the christian's substantial treasures remain; durable riches and glory are his; religion is his, and all its unseen and immortal blessings. Yes, religion, purest, sweetest, most enduring solace and support of the soul, taking you by the hand in the unguarded, tender age of youth, she leads you on in peace and safety through all the changing scenes of life; your light in darkness, your joy in sorrow, your comfort and your hope amid the decays of nature and the near prospect of death; nor forsakes you when heart and flesh are failing; but extending to you her rod and staff, goes with you through the dark valley, opens before you the portals of endless day, and bids you welcome to the joys of God's eternal presence in heaven. Dear hearer, has this religion a dwelling in your bosom? You may be young, you may be healthy, you may be rich, you may be honored of your fellow-men, may have all that the world can afford you; but if you have not religion, the fear and the love of God dwelling in you, you are infinitely poor and miserable. Angels might weep over you, cut off from the favor of God, a cumberer of the ground, and an heir of hell. No matter what you are or where you are, dear hearer, if you are not a christian and at peace with God, you can be the subject of no real

good ; the curse of God rests upon you and upon all you possess and enjoy ; and months and years, as they pass away, are only bearing you on to meet in eternity the consequences of neglect and misdoing in this state of probation.

4. This subject has a serious application to the aged in this assembly. You are called, my friends, solemnly to inquire whether you are bringing forth fruit in the decline of your age. Let me press this inquiry a little. Have you repented of sin, accepted of mercy, and fled to the Lord Jesus Christ as the only refuge of the soul ? Are you persons of prayer, living near to God, and daily looking to him for mercy to pardon, and grace to help you, in the time of your approaching need ? Do you realize how near you stand to the close of life ? Are you strengthening yourselves in God for the last conflict ; detaching your affections from the earth, and fixing them on Christ and heaven ? As the time of your departure draws on, does your faith hold out and your hope gather brightness ; and devoting these your last days to the service of Him who has kindly conducted you thus far in life, do you feel, think, and converse much on the things of Christ and heaven, endeavoring to diffuse around you a savor of piety, and, as you have opportunity, to guide and quicken others in the way of duty and salvation ? In a word, do you realize more sensibly, as you go down the hill of life, that you are strangers and pilgrims on earth ; and not knowing how soon the Master may call for you, are you, as faithful servants, watching and waiting for his coming, in the attitude of penitence and faith, of prayer and hope, of obedience and love, of weanedness from the world and meetness for heaven ?

Some of you, I trust, can return a comfortable answer to these inquiries ; and to you the pastor would say, fear not, the Saviour in whom you confide will bear you through and bear you home ; will be with you in the great change you have soon to pass ; give you the victory over death and the grave, and crown you with immortal life in his kingdom. O, that I could in faithfulness address this language to all the aged present ! But I cannot. Truth forbids it. Some of you have stood fifty, sixty, seventy years in the vineyard of God, and are yet unfruitful. Every year the great Lord of the vineyard has come, seeking fruit from you, but has sought in vain. Another year is now drawing to a close ; it has been a year of patience and long-suffering, of kindness and mercy, on the part of God ; but it has borne to heaven no record of your repentance, and none of your gratitude and love, or of obedience and service done to him who has all your life long been waiting to be gracious, and bestowing upon you the unwearied cultivation of his providence and grace. How long will it be, dying immortals, ere it shall be said of you, Cut them down, why cumber they the ground ? You have had a long day of trial ; and if yet you are unreconciled to God, a long account of sin stands written against you, and it must be an awful account to render at the bar of Infinite Justice, before which you must shortly stand.

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SERMON CCLXXV.

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PROBATION.

"Whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh, shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the spirit, shall of the spirit reap life everlasting."—GALATIANS 6 : 7, 8.

THE figure contained in these words is a perfectly familiar one, derived from the art of husbandry. The apostle refers to that standing law of the vegetable creation by which "like produces like." "A fig-tree does not bear olive berries, nor a vine figs;" nor does any tiller of the ground sow tares in his field when he hopes for a harvest of wheat. The same principle is here applied to the moral world, illustrating the connection between human actions and their results. To an important extent we see this connection running through the present life. If we know what are the precepts and examples of a parent, we estimate, with a good degree of exactness, their probable influence on his children. If he sows in the mind of his son the seeds of licentiousness and contempt of religion, we expect that son to become a reprobate in character. If he trains him up in the way in which he should go, we expect him not to depart from that way. On this principle the best maxims of education have always been founded; and experience has authorized us to tell the young, that the habits they now form will give complexion to their whole character, and that the prospects of manhood can be estimated only by the promise of early life.

But the principle is far more extensive in its application to our eternal interests. The single duty which Paul had in his eye he designedly enforced by an illustration that extends to every other duty. "He that soweth to the flesh,"—that is, governs his conduct solely by his *own sinful* inclinations, and limits his views only to the

present life, "shall reap corruption." He will find death to be the wages of sin. But "he that soweth to the spirit,"—that devotes his talents, time, property,—all that he has, to God,—in obedience to the dictates of his Spirit,—"shall reap life everlasting."

The practical truth intended to be taught in the text is, that the present actions of men bear a relation to their eternal condition, analogous to that which seed sown in a field bears to the harvest that is to spring from it.

I design in this discourse to *consider the present life as a state of* PROBATION *for eternity.*

In doing this I shall inquire what this state of probation *implies;* how it is adapted to the condition of man; and when it terminates in respect to individuals.

I. *What does this probation imply?*

Certainly it is not the same in all respects as that in which Adam was placed. This was a trial under mere law,—limited indeed to one positive prohibition in its language, but including an obligation to universal obedience. Had that obedience been perfect, Adam would have been justified, as the holy angels were, on the ground of his own personal righteousness. By disobedience he incurred the penalty of death.

To us the standard of duty is the same as to Adam; but our condition as *transgressors* is different from that of any other moral beings. Holy angels were on trial under law, and were justified on the ground of a perfect obedience. Sinful angels transgressed, and were condemned to chains of darkness. Man transgressed, and was placed in a state of *reprieve,* betwixt acquittal and condemnation. A plan of mercy was devised to put him on a new state of trial, with all the unchangeable obligations of the law resting on him, and the superadded obligations of the Gospel; and in this state of respite from death the offer of salvation is made to him anew on the terms of repentance and faith. Thus all sinners under the Gospel are placed between *acquittal* and *execution;* the sword of justice is lifted over them, but the blow is suspended, while the voice of mercy cries, "Fly to the strongholds, ye prisoners of hope."

II. Our second inquiry is, *how this probation is adapted to the condition of man?*

Its great design is to form his character, as a moral and accountable being, for eternity; and it is calculated, in the best manner, to accomplish this design.

Man is placed here under just such a system of *instruction* and *discipline* as he needs. To be prepared for eternity he must *know* his present character, his obligations, and the connection between his actions here and his final condition. The book of providence is open, to teach him that he is a sinner. Every thing around him shows that this world is under the curse of its Maker. The ground brings forth "thorns and thistles," as the fruit of man's apostacy; so that "in the sweat of his face he eats bread, till he returns to

the dust." Sickness racks his body; bereavement agonizes his heart; the fairest dawn of his earthly hopes is often overcast with disappointment and sorrow.

The book of *conscience* unites in the same testimony that he is a sinner; and the book of *revelation* not only confirms all this instruction, but sheds a light from heaven on many things all-important for man to know, which he could never learn from unassisted reason. It teaches him what the Lord his God requires of him as a *moral agent*, and what as a *sinner;* why he is under condemnation; how he may escape, and on what conditions he may be pardoned and admitted to heaven. This instruction is just what he needs as a candidate for eternity.

The state of probation is adapted to his case, also, as it implies all the powers of *moral agency* which he needs. A servant on trial for the approbation of his master, would be treated unjustly if required to remove *mountains* as the proof of his strength. A racer, if his limbs were tied, could have no fair trial for winning the prize. So man, if God required *impossibilities* of him, and placed the terms of acceptance beyond his reach, could not be considered as in a state of probation.

Moral obligation belongs only to intelligent and voluntary beings with capacities to do their duty. The laws that govern matter are not adapted to minds. Mere force may govern machines: gravitation keeps the planets in their orbits; but moral agencies are governed by *moral* law, and are accountable no farther than they have capacities to understand and do their duty. The winds blow, and the rivers run in their channels, and the planets shine in their stations; but none of these, like man, are on trial for a retribution. We are placed also in a world of *motives;* motives adapted to our state as beings on trial for eternity.

God our Maker requires us to love him supremely. In language of authority he forbids us to sin. In language of warning, he assures us that "he is angry with the wicked every day." In language of entreaty he pleads with us, "Turn ye, for why will ye die?" He has hedged up the way of trangression with restraints. We live and act, knowing that he is a witness of all that we do. Every step we take, every word we speak, every thought we cherish, is observed by him with the scrutiny of that eye which is as a flame of fire. In the deepest recesses of secresy, in the darkest shades of night, that eye looks upon us. In the act of yielding to temptation, as we are lifting the hand to commit sin, he whispers in the admonition of conscience, "do not this abominable thing which I hate;" and if we refuse to listen, he peals in our ear a louder note of remonstrance from the wailings of despair.

He appeals to our hearts besides, by a class of motives drawn from all that is persuasive in the tenderness of infinite love. The gift of his Son to be our Redeemer combines all these motives in one view, and invests them with a moral power which nothing but obduracy itself can resist. Here a bleeding Saviour pleads

with us, by the agonies of his own cross. Angels have lent their aid in proclaiming "glad tidings of great joy" to men. To enforce the motives of the Gospel, prophets and apostles have labored, and martyrs have shed their blood. The Spirit strives;—sickness and afflictions warn—the death-bed and the grave point to a coming judgment, and echo the admonition,—"arise and depart, for this is not your rest."

In all these respects, the circumstances of the present life are adapted to the condition of man, as an immortal being, and a sinner, on trial for eternity.

III. This leads me briefly to consider the last inquiry, *When this probation terminates, in respect to individuals?*

The Bible, to which alone we must look for light on this subject, assures us that probation ends at death. All the representations of the *final judgment* imply this. Then "every one shall receive the things done in *his body*, according to that he hath done." Men will enter on eternal enjoyments or sufferings, according to the character formed in this world. The rich man in the parable, was told that in his "*life time* he had received *all* his good things," and that a great gulf was fixed between him and happiness; but from the righteous, after death, "God shall wipe away all tears."

All the representations of *death* as terrible in its consequences to the wicked, imply that it closes the state of trial. "When a wicked man dieth, his expectation shall perish." But how so, if he is still encouraged to *expect* and *hope* for another period of probation? "The wicked is driven away in his wickedness, but the righteous hath hope in his death." If there were a second state of probation, the *wicked* would have hope in his death. In that case life would not be the only day of preparatory action, and death "the *night* in which no man can work;"—nor would it be necessary, on that account, for each to do with his might "*whatsoever* his hand findeth to do."

I have chosen this subject with a view to the serious, *practical reflections* which it suggests.

My *first* reflection is, that *they who make this world their supreme object in living, utterly mistake the great purpose of life.* For what is this purpose? Nothing less than to secure the happiness of the soul for ever in the favor of God. It is a *preparatory* state, bearing the same relation to eternity that seed-time bears to harvest. All the satisfaction, all the advantage of the husbandman in casting his seed into the ground, lies in the expectation of what he is to reap. Planting is nothing and sowing is nothing but *lost* labor, aside from the *crop* that is to be produced by all this pains. So men judge and act in common concerns; and while they sweat and toil in their daily business, always regard some object beyond the present moment to be gained. So they should judge and act in the concerns of their souls, remembering that there is a *harvest at the end of the world*, when "he that has sown to the flesh, shall of the flesh reap corruption." So

they should judge and act, as knowing that their everlasting condition hereafter depends on their actions here.

Let me ask now, to what extent men *do* judge and act in this manner? Just look at the pursuits, the amusements, the plans of education and business, most prevalent among careless men, and you will see in all these, if I mistake not, *very little* ultimate regard to God and eternity. Men of this description rise in the morning without thinking of God. They eat their food without thinking of God. They pass through the day and lie down to rest at night without thinking of God. They look forward and lay their plans of business for years to come,—plans involving the dearest interests of themselves and families,—and yet, perhaps, "God is not in all their thoughts." Thus they live "*without* God," or as the apostle most emphatically says, *atheists* in the world. But these principles of action are not limited altogether to such men; to some extent (I do not say how far) they prevail also among those who bear the christian name, and have influence in the christian church. Temporal industry, you say, is an important duty. Children must be trained up to act a part among men, and earn their *own living*, as it is called. Be it so: all that should by no means be forgotten in this forming age. But then, christian parents, are you not too apt to forget, or at least to act as though you had forgotten, the far more important point, that this life is only preparatory to another? On the Sabbath, and occasionally at other times, the child is told, perhaps, that he is *born for eternity;* but through the *week*, how is it? Are not the conversation, the habits, the grand *current* of moral influence on him such as to make the impression that he is *born for time?* He is told that he must "*get a living*" in much the same manner as though this were the chief end of life. He is educated as an intellectual being, to shine in a profession, to gain property, to acquire an influence, to act a part,—for *time*. But God sees that all that is wrong. When that child was born, God said to the parent—"Take this child and nurse it for *me*." Let him be trained to act his part in *time*, but so as not to forget that time is only the threshold of eternity; that he is *immortal*, and must live when all the nations are dead, the earth is burnt up, and the heavens are no more.

Only let this one principle be settled, that this life is but a season of *discipline* for eternity, and then see how impious are the maxims of worldly men; and how frivolous the objects from which they hope for happiness to themselves and families! Look at the round of fashion, and ceremony, and gayety, the wealth, and pleasure, and splendor in which they glory; how utterly worthless are these when viewed in relation to their *whole* existence! One fact stamps the character of all the objects in which they delight, that not one of these can be carried with them beyond the grave. Death separates them at a stroke from all the pleasures of sense;—from all their offices and honors, their posses-

sions and amusements;—and exchanges their songs of revelry and mirth for the wailings of despair.

My *second* reflection is, that *it becomes every one to take care what habits he forms, and what influence he exerts in this world. He is acting for eternity.* The admonitions of this subject extend therefore to every action of his life, but more especially to those two classes of actions called *secret* and *indifferent*, because he is least likely to place a proper estimate on the importance of these. Why should he be scrupulous about those things to which no human eye is witness? His *thoughts* are conceived in the secret recesses of his own bosom;—why should he be solicitous concerning these? For two important reasons. In reference to his whole existence there *are no* secret things. *Thoughts* are not secret. *God* sees them, and he will *publish* them another day to all worlds. Another reason is, these secret things, as he calls them, have an immense influence on his own character. Like a seed sown in the ground, one *thought* produces another, and that produces more, and so the product multiplies, till this train of thoughts engrosses and occupies the soul, and becomes, in fact, the *character* of the man. Hence it is an axiom, that every man is in *reality*, what he is in *secret;* and he is in secret what he has made *himself* by the habits of *thought* which he indulges.

Strictly speaking, too, for the same reason, there is no such thing as *indifferent* actions. Moralists and theologians, for certain purposes, may include under this head a large proportion of the "deeds done in the body;" and we may be accustomed to regard them as quite unimportant; and yet our Judge has told us that for all these we must give account. The reason is, that though, in themselves, without moral *character*, they are not without moral *influence*. What can be more indifferent than an idle *thought?* It comes and goes in a moment, and is forgotten. Yet it is recorded as with "a pen of *iron*," and will be brought into remembrance at the final day, because it stands connected with our endless character and destination.

Besides, *others around us* are acting for eternity; acting under a system of reciprocal relations, which make *us*, in a thousand ways, responsible for our influence in forming *their* character. An idle word is spoken in one moment, and the next, perhaps, no recollection of it remains in our mind. But who can tell till the day of judgment what *mischief* that word may have wrought in some other mind, or in thousands of other minds, immortal like our own? A single noxious weed, standing in a field, is harmless, but it soon ceases to be a *single* weed; the wind wafts its seed to another field, and thence to another, and another; till this *one* noxious plant becomes a *hundred millions*, and spreads over a state or a continent. So it is with *example* among men. One wicked parent may spread his baneful influence through twenty generations of his descendants. Some of these may spread it round the globe; and all may *feel* it through everlasting *ages.*

On the other hand, the example of one pious individual may be attended with unspeakable benefits to his fellow-men. Suppose that a few such men as Luther, and Knox, and Edwards had never existed; and who can tell how much the want of their influence on the world might have changed our own moral condition, changed the state of the church on earth, and changed the results of the final judgment. Suppose that the little company that landed on Plymouth rock, with their associates and successors among our pilgrim fathers, had all been atheists, who would ever have seen *our New England*, with its christian schools and colleges, its thousand churches and pastors, and its tens of thousands who have been redeemed from spiritual death, and become sons and daughters of the Lord Almighty? O, who can look down through eternal ages, and remember that he and all around him, are forming a character for endless being, and not feel the awful consequences which hang on this probation; not feel his dread responsibility *every hour*, for the influence he exerts on his fellow-men?

My *third* reflection is, that *our relations to eternity should teach us the true value of time.* Let a man believe that there is no hereafter, or no hereafter of misery to the wicked, and he may consistently trifle away life in neglect of religion. But let him believe the views exhibited in this discourse, and can he trifle? In our whole immortal existence no period is so important as this short life, if we view it as our only season of *probation.* I say this *short* life, for at the longest it is but a few days before our bodies must crumble to dust; and even the world which we inhabit, with all its generations, and all the pageantry of its false glory, is "passing away."

> "What does not fade? The tow'r that long had stood
> "The crush of thunder and the warring winds,
> "The flinty pyramids and walls of brass,
> "Fall by the slow but sure destroyer, Time:
> "Achaia, Rome, and Egypt moulder down;
> "And all these worlds that roll around the sun,—
> "The sun himself,—shall die."

Yet every man, and woman, and child in this assembly has a soul that shall *not* die; and in its consequences, every action and thought of that soul is *eternal*, and abides for ever. And the destinies of that soul must be fixed in the present life; a life so uncertain, that none can tell what a day may bring forth; so fleeting, that it vanishes away like a shadow; so frail, that it breaks at a touch, like the spider's web. Yet on this little span of probation the welfare of our whole immortality is at stake. Here every one, whatever his character, or age, or condition, is in a world of *hope*, a world of *motives*, urging him to embrace the Gospel, and be happy. But death shuts up the scene; no more hope, no more motives to impenitent sinners. When that hour

comes our preparatory work ceases, and our unalterable retribution begins. "It is appointed unto all men *once* to die,"—*but once*,—"and after death, the judgment."

This stamps a value on time surpassing all conception. It is our season for doing a *great* work; a work which must be done in a few days or never. Look, then, on this world of immortal beings, each one of whom is to live and die for himself; to live and die for eternity; to live but once, and die but once, and say whether they feel the worth of *time*. It is indeed a world of action; all is bustle and business. In the senate chamber, in the court, the counting-room, the camp, the field, the shop, the market, all is action. But what are these men doing? Worse than nothing, if their time and efforts have not a direct bearing on the great work of the soul and eternity. And what, my dear hearers, are *you* doing? Say, beloved youth, are there not some of you who have not *begun* this great work, and yet presumptuously hope that there are years enough to come? Cherish not this delusion. Take your stand in some great city, and fix your eye on the passing crowd. Among these busy thousands you see *one old man*, tottering under the decrepitude of fourscore years. You look at him as a stranger in this world. Where are the companions of his childhood? *In the grave*. And all this throng, exulting in the gayety of youth or the vigor of manhood, will go down to the grave, with *few* exceptions, *long* before reaching the period of that old man; and will you risk your salvation on the hope that you shall be among those *few* exceptions?

Another year of your short life is just finished; with all its Sabbaths and means of grace, it is *gone for ever*. A new year has begun, which to some of us may probably be the *last* year of our probation. In the light of this subject, may I not hope that every heart is ready to say, "If God shall spare my life this year I will not waste my precious time, but will devote it to him." Do you make this resolution? Then take a few plain and practical directions; the sum of which is, Let *holiness to the Lord* be the motto of all your actions.

Fifty-two *Sabbaths* are before you this year; let each of these be kept holy. Let no *day* of this year be spent without reading the Bible, nor without prayer to God. Let no *hour* of this year be lost in needless *sleep*; nor in useless attentions to *dress*; nor in excessive indulgence of *appetite* in *food* and *drink*; nor in any *conversation*, or the reading of *any book* that you would dread to recollect at the judgment.

"Spend your time this year in nothing which you know must be *repented of*. Spend it in nothing on which you might not pray for the blessing of God. Spend it in nothing which you could not review with a quiet conscience on your dying bed. Spend it in nothing which you might not safely and properly be *found doing* if death should surprise you in the act."*

* Baxter's Directory.

¶ My dear impenitent hearers, to close this subject, I would gladly tell you, and make you feel, how solemn is your condition. The amount of all I have said, all I can say, is, *you are on trial for eternity.* A universe of motives is around you. The law threatens, the Gospel invites, providences urge, conscience warns, time flies, judgment approaches. The heavens and the earth tender you their aid in this trial for eternity; sun, moon, and stars shine to light you onward: angels stoop from the battlements of heaven to see the result of this trial; God waits with long suffering, to see the result. Say, *what shall this result be?* Will you die, eternally? or, will you be holy and happy forever?

SERMON CCLXXVI.

BY REV. EBENEZER PORTER, D. D.

THE JUDGMENT.

Because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness, by that man whom he hath ordained.—Acts, 17: 31.

This passage is the conclusion of Paul's sermon at Mars Hill. The preacher skilfully takes a subject suggested by the occasion, and adapts his reasonings to the character of his hearers. He boldly proclaims the truth to those who had never heard it; and solemnly enforces it, with a frequent application to their consciences. We admire the fearless honesty of the man who could stand up among the philosophers and scholars of Athens, and, reviewing the idolatry of that renowned metropolis, declare the period of its utmost splendor to have been times of ignorance. We honor the pious fidelity that makes Jesus Christ the end and object of preaching, and shows men their sins in order to show them the way of salvation.

The apostle exhibits the solemnities of the judgment as a motive to repentance.

Independently of revelation, we must look upon the doctrine of the text as at least reasonable and probable. To what end is a day of *probation* without a day of retribution? Without such a day, how can the Supreme Lawgiver stamp on the characters of men

any public marks of his approbation or displeasure? Without reference to such a day, how can the unequal allotments of Providence be explained? and whence the impressions of dread that thrill the guilty soul in anticipation of an hereafter? But the Bible places this subject beyond the reach of doubt. The text affirms that a day of judgment is *appointed*,—appointed by God.

The *first* inquiry before us, then, is, By whom will the world be judged? and the

Second, In what *manner* will this office be executed?

I. To the *first* inquiry, By *whom* will the world be judged? the text gives a brief answer, "By *that man* whom God hath ordained." But who *is* that man? The same whom the Father commanded all his angels to worship, and to whom he said, "Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever." The same who was both the *son* of David, and the *Lord* of David. The same who testified of himself, "The Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son, and hath given him authority to execute judgment also, because he is the Son of Man." The office of judge, then, is assigned to Christ, as a part of that mediatorial work for which he became incarnate, and in reference to which he is styled "Man," and the "Son of Man." But does this imply that he is *only* man? The Judge of the world, unquestionably, must possess attributes which cannot be possessed by a mere man; which cannot be communicated to any *created* being. This office implies infinite knowledge, to comprehend at once the eternal counsels of Jehovah and the secrets of all hearts. It implies infinite *authority*, to pronounce the final sentence; infinite *truth*, *purity*, and *wisdom*, to do it justly; infinite power to execute it. Let it not be said that these attributes are *delegated* to Christ for this special purpose. The supposition that the infinite God *can* delegate his own attributes, so as to make a *created* being infinite, is an absurdity too obvious to require refutation. Accordingly the two facts that Christ rose from the dead and that he will judge the world, are often mentioned by the apostles in close connection; the former as a pledge of a general resurrection, and both as evidence of his real divinity. Paul, in his long discussion of this subject to the Corinthians, speaks of the resurrection and judgment as the great "closing scene of the mediatorial work." "Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father." The dispensation of grace and forgiveness will then cease, and the reign of strict law will return and continue for ever.

II. Our *second* inquiry is, In what *manner* will the world be judged? And here again the text gives a brief answer, "*In righteousness.*"

There is much sublimity in the apocalyptic representation of the judgment-seat, as a great *white throne*, emblematical at once of the majesty, and purity, and impartiality of Him who sat upon it. When we are told, however, that he will judge the world *in righteousness*, the question arises, will his final decisions be strictly ac-

cording to *law*, or in other words, according to *personal character?* I reply, doubtless a plain reader of the Bible would understand this to be the meaning of its often-repeated declarations, like the following: "God will render to every one according to his deeds;" "For every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account in the day of judgment;" "Every one shall receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good, or whether it be evil."

But it may be said that this view of the subject is attended with two important difficulties. The first is, that to suppose all men will be treated according to their *deeds*, in the judgment, is inconsistent with the doctrine of justification by faith alone. Certainly it is a subject not of empty speculation, but of awful interest for us to understand, on what depends our acquittal or condemnation before the Judge of all.

Now the only standard of duty which God has given to men is the *law* and the *Gospel*. The Gospel confirms all the original precepts of the law, and adds others of its own, adapted to the case of transgressors. The standard of *trial* and the standard of *duty* must be the same. Suppose, then, you are arraigned at the final bar. There the *law*, your original rule of life, is presented, with all its holy claims, as the measure of your character. There your own actions are unfolded, from the record of God's omniscience. Can you stand up then and say, as a sinless angel might, All the precepts of the law have I kept? No child of Adam can say this. No one can be justified, therefore, on the ground of a perfect, meritorious obedience. The *Gospel* then is presented with its additional claims. Have you repented of your sins, and believed in Christ? If so, you may be accounted righteous for the sake of his atonement; and thus, while guilty in yourself, you may plead a righteousness which meets the demands of both law and Gospel. All your deeds, then, whether good or evil, are brought into judgment for important ends: the evil, to honor the grace by which they are *pardoned;* the good, to honor the grace by which they are *produced*, and as public testimonials of love to Christ. Thus you are saved as a hell-deserving sinner; not for the sake of any merit either in faith or in the obedience which springs from it, but for the sake of that all-sufficient righteousness which is received by faith alone.

But suppose you are destitute of this faith, how does the case stand? A fearful catalogue of deeds, evil, and evil only, stares you in the face. You have no righteousness in yourself, none in Christ, to meet the claims of a broken law. All its curses must fall, without abatement, on your guilty head.

But it is said there is still another difficulty. In many passages of the Bible the sins of believers are spoken of as "covered," "remembered no more," "blotted out," and "cast into the depths of the sea." Such declarations, it is alleged, are at least inconsistent with the supposition that the *sins of believers* will be publicly

exhibited at the day of judgment. But does this language certainly imply that the sins of believers will be concealed in that day? There are many reasons for thinking that the Spirit of God did not mean to teach us this. The pardon of a believer can not imply that when his sins are "blotted out," they shall thenceforward be unknown to other intelligent beings.

Such a supposition is inconsistent with *fact*. For the sins of good men have already been published very extensively, and that under the express direction of God himself. All who have read the Bible know of David's adultery, Hezekiah's vain-glory, and Peter's denial of his Master. How can you and I forget the sins of these men, when we shall meet them in the judgment?

If the sins of good men were concealed, their *holy* affections would not be adequately displayed. In what view does the piety of Paul shine with the most attractive interest? In his deep contrition for having persecuted the church. Why are we tenderly affected by the glow of penitential feeling in the fifty-first psalm? Because it is the language of a broken heart, lamenting its woful defection from God. So all the graces that shone in sanctified Peter must forever be associated in the recollections of the church, with the dreadful deed he committed at the high-priest's palace?

If the sins of *good* men were concealed, the sins of the *wicked* could not be fully exhibited. The complex relations of this world make men in a thousand ways instrumental of each other's actions. Many a youth has been accelerated in the way to death, not simply by the influence of ungodly associates, but by the occasional indiscretions of a pious parent. Many a bold despiser of the Gospel has been strengthened in his unbelief by the unworthy conduct of some professor or minister of religion, whose piety, though not sufficiently elevated and uniform, is still unquestionable. Now, the sins of the wicked being thus intertwined with those of the righteous, how is it possible that the one should be fully exhibited while the other is concealed?

And what good purpose, let me further ask, would be answered by such concealment? Would it render the sins of believers less real or less hateful? Would it magnify the grace by which they are forgiven? Would it make them more humble or watchful?

In its practical influence, too, on the lives of christians, the expectation of a public disclosure at the judgment is important. Depraved affections are cherished by the shade of secrecy, and awed into constraint by the apprehension of exposure to the light. He, then, who firmly believes that all the motives of his actions, and all the secrets of his heart will be revealed before assembled worlds, will keep that heart with all diligence. He will watch and pray against sin; will resist the threatening temptation, and suppress the rising emotion that would draw him to dishonor God and wrong his own soul.

We come, therefore, to this plain conclusion, that when the sins of believers are spoken of as *covered* and *blotted out*, the language

is figurative; not implying that their sins will be forgotten by God, or by themselves, or that they will be hidden from others, at the judgment. The simple meaning is that they are *forgiven;* and when God shall bring "*every work* into judgment, with every secret thing," all heaven must adore the wisdom that guards the inviolable honors of the law, while it provides for the pardon of its penitent transgressors.

We have thus seen that the world will be judged by Jesus Christ, and will be judged in righteousness.

But we must not leave this subject without a nearer view of those transactions which involve the immortal interests of us all. God forbid, my hearers, that I should seek to amuse your fancy on a subject so awfully serious as this. The only description of the last day on which we can rely is that which the Bible contains; and to a few chief points of this description let us now direct our thoughts.

The coming of Christ, then, to judge the world, will be a *public* event.

His ascension from Mount Olivet, though a scene of deep and tender interest to his disciples, was comparatively a *private* occurrence, witnessed only by a few select friends. Not so his *return.* No testimony of chosen witnesses will then be needed. None of the ordinary means by which great events have been announced from man to man, and from nation to nation, will be employed on that occasion. No heralds or gazettes will spread the intelligence that the Judge is coming; for he "shall descend from heaven with a *shout.*" Every ear shall hear the proclamation, "Behold, he cometh in clouds; and every *eye* shall see him."

It will be a *sudden* event.

The fact that Christ will come to judgment is plainly and often declared, but the time *when* he will come has never been expressly revealed. "Of that day and hour," said the Judge himself, "knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only." The reason of this arrangement is immediately suggested; "*Watch*, therefore, for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come. *Watch* and pray *always*, that ye may be counted worthy to stand before the Son of Man." But that event, it seems, will come unexpectedly to a careless world; sudden as lightning, sudden as the storm of wrath that burst on the cities of the plain. At midnight the cry will be made, "The bridegroom cometh, go ye out to meet him." That cry will reach the bottom of the grave, and the deepest caverns of the sea; will ring in the ears of sleeping millions; will echo through all heaven, through all hell; "Behold, the bridegroom cometh."

It will be a *majestic* event.

When God descended to give the law at Sinai, the whole mount was covered with a cloud of smoke, and quaked greatly. And when the voice of the trumpet sounded long, and waxed louder and louder, all the people trembled. Well might they tremble; God

was there in majesty. But sublime and awful as it was, how did that occasion compare with the scene before us. Then, a single mountain quaked; now, continents and oceans, the earth, and the skies, shall be shaken. Then, mighty thunderings issued from a single cloud; now, "the heavens will pass away with a great noise." Then, the top of Sinai was in a blaze; now, "the elements will melt with fervent heat, the earth also, and the works that are therein will be burnt up." Here will be majesty such as the universe has never witnessed. With dread significance is this called "the *great* and *notable* day of the Lord." In its circumstances, its objects, and its consequences, it will be verily a *great* day.

Great in its *circumstances.*

It will be ushered in with the sound of a "great trumpet;" the heavens will pass away "with a great noise," the Judge will be revealed from heaven, with his mighty angels, in *flaming fire;* or, as he himself says, will come "with power and great glory;" his own glory as God incarnate; the glory of his Father's goodness, omnipotence, and vengeance; the glory of the holy angels. He will be seated on "a great white throne." Truly this will be a *great* day.

There will be a *great* assembly. Those first rebels in the kingdom of God, the angels who kept not their first estate, will be summoned to the trial of that day.

> ——— "Then the great foe of God and man
> From his dark den blaspheming, drags his chains,
> And rears his brazen front, with thunder scarr'd,
> Receives his sentence, and *begins* his hell."

Then the sea will give up its dead, and death and hell will deliver up the dead that are in them. There will be Adam, the father of our race. There will be Noah, Abraham, Moses, and all the patriarchs; Samuel, David, Isaiah, and all the Prophets; Peter, John, Paul, and all the apostles. There will be the men of Sodom and of Nineveh. There will be all the Cæsars that have troubled the world; all the armies and senates that have been the instruments of their ambition; all the Neros that have persecuted the church; all the missionaries that have labored, and the martyrs that have bled for Christ; all the preachers who have sought, under whatever name, to promote or to pervert the truth; and all their hearers who have embraced or rejected the Gospel.

There shall *you* and *I* be. This congregation will make a part of that vast assembly. We who have preached Jesus the Saviour, or have heard him preached with cold hearts, shall then *see* him; we shall *see* him. And oh! that sight will fill these hearts with anguish or joy.

Pilate saw him once as a despised Galilean, arraigned in his judgment-hall, and condemned to scourging and crucifixion. With what feelings must he see him now? Herod and his soldiers saw him, and set him at naught. With what feelings must *they* see

him, encompassed with ten thousand times ten thousand saints and angels! They who platted the crown of thorns, and they who drove the nails and thrust the spear, how must they feel, when they see the glory, or rather when they are struck blind with the effulgent glory of their Judge?

That day will be *great* in its *objects*. Then the character of God will shine with a lustre before unknown to mortals. His law will appear in all its perfection and glory. His providence, will break forth from the darkness in which it has been shrouded as the consummation of unsearchable wisdom and goodness. That day will exhibit, in a new light, the worth of man's soul; the deadly depravity of his heart; the efficacy, and plenitude, and sovereignty of divine grace. And then the plan of salvation will appear in all its parts and provisions, with all the resplendent lustre reflected from the Redeemer's crown; to men and angels the everlasting object of wonder and joy.

When custom, or curiosity, or duty calls together an assembly of men in this world, how often do their faces betray the listlessness of their hearts? Here is a sleeper, there a trifler. But to those objects for which the world will be gathered at the judgment-seat, no one will feel indifferent. Among all those millions, not one sleeper, not one trifler will be seen; not one who does not know that his own immortal interests are at stake.

That day will be *great* in its *consequences*. It will be a day of *separation*. In this world you see the two great classes of men, the righteous and the wicked, promiscuously intermingled together. You see them enlightened by the same sun, breathing the same air, speaking the same language, protected by the same laws, associated in the same scenes of business. On the *Sabbath* you see them enter the same sanctuary, and sit side by side, to hear the same sermon. In the *family* you see them seated at the same table, eating the same food, and lying down to rest under the same roof. But the great Judge of hearts sees all this time the difference between those who love him and those who do not; and he will show this difference in the day of separation. Then the husband and wife, who lived together in this world, he will place, one on the right hand, and the other on the left; parent and child, one on the right hand, and the other on the left; brother and sister, one on the right hand, the other on the left. They *part*, not as in this life they had often done, for a few days or weeks, to meet again, with new transports of affection: they part *for ever*. That separation is *final* and *eternal*.

To those on his right hand the Judge will say, "Come, ye blessed of my Father." To those on his left, "Depart, ye cursed, into everlasting fire." "There shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth. These shall go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into life eternal." Think, my beloved hearers, on the amazing import of these words—*everlasting punishment—life eternal*. O, the ecstasy of the redeemed, while they ascend to their thrones of

glory! O, the agony of despairing sinners, while they sink under the frown of their Judge!

My christian brethren, do you expect to witness these scenes? Do *you* expect, with your own eyes, to see "your God in glory, and your world on fire?" to hear with your own ears the sound of the great trump and the noise of dissolving elements? to stand up, each for himself, in the great assembly, and give account of all the deeds done in the body? Yes, you do expect this. What influence, then, let me ask, has this expectation on your conduct? Be honest with yourselves to-day. Lay open your hearts to the light. How often do you reflect that all your actions, and words, and thoughts, (yes, thoughts too,) must come into judgment? To bring the inquiry into narrower limits, that you may feel its force:—what if all the thoughts of your heart, for *one week*, or only for *this day*, were written out and read before this assembly; would you shrink from the disclosure? Would it cover your face with confusion? How, then, can these same hearts bear the scrutiny of the omniscient eye, and the inspection of assembled worlds?

My dear impenitent hearers, with what emotions do you anticipate this glorious, dreadful day? Now the Saviour speaks in accents of love, while you spurn the heaven which he has purchased and the glory which he offers. But can your heart endure when he shall speak in the thunders of the last trump? His calls of mercy a thousand times repeated you can refuse, you do refuse. But when he shall summon you to judgment, *can* you refuse to obey *that* call? Here you stand on this earth, and defy the authority of Him who made it; but where will you stand in that day, when the heavens and the earth shall be no more? when you have called in vain to the rocks and to the mountains, "Fall on us, and hide us from the face of Him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb; for the great day of his wrath is come, and who shall be able to stand?" By the preciousness of your soul, I pray you do not forget that day. By the love of your Saviour, I pray you do not forget that day. In the name of your Judge, I beseech you, I charge you, do not forget that day.

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SERMON CCLXXVII.

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The Question, whether it is right to use intoxicating drinks at the present day tried and settled.

We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ: that every one may receive the things done in his body according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.—2 Corinthians, 5 : 10.

There is no better mode of testing the moral character of our actions, and of arriving at a correct and safe judgment respecting them, than to carry them forward to the great and infallible adjudication of human conduct, and try to discover how they *will* appear as subjected to the scrutiny of the all-seeing and impartial Judge. And, as we have not assembled together to-day for the purpose of being *amused*, nor merely to review again scenes of temporal ruin and distress which we have often contemplated before as connected with the vice of intemperance, nor to pass sentence of condemnation one upon another, for past differences of opinion among ourselves on this subject, but to consider seriously and prayerfully a great *moral question*,—involving considerations far more interesting than *any* scenes of mere physical and temporal suffering can involve—it will accord well with the design of our present meeting, if, dropping every other inquiry pertaining to this subject, we occupy this hour with an examination of the following plain and simple question:

Is it *right*, morally considered, in the eye of God and of his law, for persons in health, and under present circumstances of light and knowledge on the subject, to use intoxicating liquors as a drink? Can this practice be fairly justified on any correct principles of morality? Is it sanctioned by an unprejudiced and enlightened con-

science? Does it coincide with what will be man's convictions of right and wrong in the great and last day?

If this question, as thus variously stated, can be fully met and answered on good and sufficient evidence, I have too much confidence in the moral feelings of this assembly, not to believe that with *them* at least, the practice referred to will henceforth be finally and for ever at an end.

Let us then carry this question, so far as we are now able to do it, to the bar of final judgment. And in the sight of that great trial of men's characters, let us see what moral aspect the practice of using alcoholic drinks at the present day by persons in health bears, and try to discover what will be the sentiments of mankind in respect to it as settled by this *last* and *decisive trial* to which all men will at length be subjected.

Here several arguments deserve to be particularly noticed, and however trite they may seem to some, we cannot do justice to this subject without distinctly recalling them to your remembrance.

1. The use of intoxicating drinks by mankind is not *necessary* to their health or happiness.

The day is for ever gone by when it could be pretended that men's health or happiness required the use of these drinks. It is now settled beyond all reasonable question, that these drinks may be wholly laid aside, and the health and the happiness of mankind remain unimpaired. The plea, therefore, that these drinks are to be used on the ground that to persons in health they are necessary in order to protect them in the enjoyment of health and happiness must be given up. It cannot be maintained for a moment, against the light of evidence which at the present day shines around us—repeated experiments have satisfied the public mind (if there *ever* was any serious doubt on the subject) that men will live as long, and be as vigorous and healthy, and perform as much labor, and support their families as well, and be as useful members of the church and the state, and be as fairly entitled to the respect, and confidence, and esteem, of their fellow-men, and keep as clear a *conscience* in all respects towards God and man, in the pratice of an entire abstinence from these drinks, as they can be in the use of them. There *can* be no honest doubt on this point. It is the testimony of physicians; it is the testimony of those who have made the trial for themselves, who once used intoxicating drinks, but who have discontinued the use of them, and who, as the result of their own experience, stand ready to tell us

with an united voice, that these drinks are *not* necessary to mankind either for health or comfort.

Now let this *useless, needless* practice, with all its attendant consequences as it *has* prevailed among men, and as it is now prevailing among them, be looked at for a single moment in the light of the Judgment Day, and how would it appear? See the gathering universe, at the voice of the Archangel and the trump of God, coming to the last great audit before the omniscient Judge; and as they come and draw nigh to the dread tribunal, see under the searching light of his countenance the sin of intemperance as it will appear at that day in its nature and in its consequences; then let it be distinctly understood that this terrible vice, in every instance, grew out of a *needless, useless* practice; and what would be thought of that practice? who would be hardy enough to justify it in these circumstances? who would not condemn it? who could look upon it, or upon those who vindicated it, with any other feelings than consternation and horror? What, let a mere *useless* practice, a practice for which there is no plea of necessity, be the occasion of leading to such tremendous consequences! Is such a practice at this day, and without the shadow of a necessity for it or any utility in it, moral or immoral? is it right or is it wrong? Before *God!* judge ye.

2. The practice of using intoxicating drinks is not only needless and useless, but it tends to the formation of *intemperate appetites and habits.*

In settling the *morality* of this practice, and ascertaining whether it be right or wrong to use these drinks, we must inquire into the proper *tendency* of such use. Is that tendency good, or is it evil? Is it of such a kind as that mankind are likely to be made wiser, and better, and happier by it, or the reverse? What is the tendency of this practice, as learned from the whole history of its actual results among men? The proper reply to this inquiry we have stated above; it is, that the use of these drinks tends to the formation of intemperate appetites and habits; it is so decidedly of this character, that of all that numerous and unhappy class of men who have ever become the besotted slaves of intemperance, not one has sunk to this degraded condition in any other way. The God of nature, as we come from his forming hand, does not give us these appetites and habits; we form them for ourselves; they are entirely superinduced, not natural; and the process by which they are formed is that of counteracting other and opposite pre-existing inclinations, and gradually overcoming them, and thus preparing the way for the introduction

of a new, artificial, unnatural set of desires and propensities which the God of nature never gave to man, but which, in every original inclination of our being that *He* has given us, He has steadily, and uniformly, and decidedly opposed. Yes: all the intemperance in the world, and all its unhappy consequences on earth and in hell, are the result of simply using, using in any degree, using at all, these deleterious poisons. For it is quite manifest, that if these drinks had not been used, they could have done no hurt. It is by *using* them that intemperance with all its train of woes has come upon mankind. And *how* has it come upon them? Through the *tendency* which is *in* the use of these drinks to lead on to the formation of intemperate *appetites* and habits. When, therefore, we look at the appetites and habits as thus formed, and see to what a powerful extent they are productive of evil, we may refer the whole of the sickening spectacle thus contemplated to the *use* of these drinks. For if strong drinks had not been used, these evils had not been. The tendency, then, of the simple *use* of these drinks is to these results, inasmuch as it has actually led to these results, and that, too, in opposition to almost every conceivable inducement to the contrary. Now I ask,—and I desire to do it as in view of the scenes of the Judgment Day, what is the *moral* character of *that conduct* which tends to create an appetite for these drinks, and form that appetite to lead on to *habits* of indulgence in the use of these drinks, which habits issue in confirmed intemperance? What is the *morality* of the conduct in question? Is it justifiable? Is it right? Is it acting as duty requires? Is it acting as the God of truth and holiness will or can approve? Imagine the day of *trial* come, which will test all questions of this sort: imagine yourselves a component part of that mighty assembly, and every heart is unmasked, and every practice appears just as it is, with all its tendencies to good or ill, and stripped of every disguise: *now*, how will the practice in question appear? *Now*, what will be the thought of that man who could consent to use these drinks, which are not only needless, but the tendency of using which was to lead men to become drunkards, and vagabonds, and nuisances to the world? Can such conduct (if its tendencies are understood) be vindicated as morally right? How *does* it appear as surveyed in the light of the great day; as weighed in the balances of eternity; as estimated and judged of through the quickened moral sensibilities which that day of the revelation of the righteous judgment of God will call into exercise?

3. The use of intoxicating drinks occasions a very great and needless waste of *property.*

Property, when rightly employed, is a powerful means of procuring *influence* to its possessor, and of enabling him to confer benefits on mankind. It is therefore to be regarded as a gift in trust from the great Lord and Proprietor of all things, bestowed for the purpose of creating in him who posseses it, a greater capability of usefulness, and of advancing him in this respect nearer to his beneficent Creator. It is a gift, of course, for the right and proper use of which men are responsible; and there rests upon them a moral obligation to use it in a suitable and proper manner, first for their own accommodation and comfort, and next for the benefit of their fellow-men. For this use of property (as well as of other means of being useful to mankind) God holds every man responsible. His means of usefulness in this particular may be great or small; he may possess much or little; what he *has* he is bound to use in a proper manner. A needless waste of property is *sin;* a profligate and injurious expenditure is sin in a higher degree; and the sin increases as the expenditure becomes more useless and more hurtful. Now apply this reasoning to the case before us. The practice of using intoxicating drinks we have shown to be (to persons in health) unnecessary to a continuance of health and to happiness. Of course, the expenditure is a *needless* expenditure; it is a mere waste; an application of the means of doing good, which does no good, but evil only. Besides, the expenditure in question is a great expenditure; the waste terrible; it is enough, in this view alone, to constitute it a public and prominent national evil. We have heard complaints directed against the expenditure of property which was designed to convert and save the heathen, on the ground that this expenditure was becoming so great as to threaten at some future day to cripple the resources of the country, and to inflict upon us the evils of a national poverty. But the expenditure for *foreign missions* (i. e. to save the heathen world from their sins) is but as a drop to the ocean when put in comparison with that prodigal expenditure, needless, and ten thousand times worse than needless, which the use of alcoholic drinks occasions. Now the question recurs—Is it right, is it morally considered, proper, and suitable, and in harmony with conscience and with the will of God, that this immense waste of property should be made, that this truly terrific prodigality should be practised, for nothing? For nothing, did I say? Oh that it *were* for nothing, if it *must be at all;*

and if we could place it on *that* ground, and view it as a merely *useless* and *idle* expenditure, and see it carried up to the bar of God, as an item in that dread account which we shall by-and-by be called to give before the assembled creation for the deeds done in the body, how would it look there? Under what *moral* aspect would it then and there appear? Would it seem right? Would *conscience* approve, and God approve this useless and idle prodigality in the application of the means which Heaven had given us for the good of mankind? But it is not a merely idle and useless expenditure; it is an expenditure injuriously employed; lavished on men's *lusts;* putting oaths into their mouths, and weapons into their hands, and fever into their veins, and closing the scene of man's short life on earth, in the darkness of a dying hour upon which no hope gleams, no mercy from on high sheds its soothing, cheering influence. Now, is the *morality* of the practice which leads to such results fairly to be vindicated? Is it right *thus* to appropriate, in whatever degree, great or small, the means which God has given to mankind of doing good and being useful to their fellow-men? Is such use of property fairly to be vindicated? When the *poor* man, who has not yet lost all feeling of right and wrong on this subject, goes to the counter of the grocer, or to the bar of the tavèrner, and lays down his two or three cents, and takes in return his potations of alcoholic liquor, and thinks, as he does it, of his family, destitute, perhaps, of decent and comfortable clothing, and remembers what, perhaps, he was told before he left home, that there was no bread in his house, and no fuel at his door; that his children cannot go to school or to the house of God for want of suitable apparel; and that for the same reason he feels *himself* shut out from the sanctuary; and that throughout his dwelling, and around his fire-side, where comforts should cluster if any where on earth, there is, through mere poverty, an air of cheerlessness, and care, and gloom:—when, I say, he goes to the place of common rendezvous for such purposes, and there, as he lays down the price for the gratification which he takes, remembers the necessities of his family, can he feel, does he feel that he is doing right? Does not that air of cheerlessness which his dwelling exhibits, sometimes come across his mind and admonish him that he is not doing right? Does not the care-worn countenance of his wife, when her complainings are heard in no other form, sometimes tell him that he is not doing right? Does not the cry for bread from his little dependent children, and their squalid and disgusting appearance because their father will not

provide better things for them, spending his money for that which is not bread, and his labor for that which satisfieth not, sometimes tell him that he is doing wrong, in thus laying out his hard and scanty earnings? And it is pertinent to ask, whether does not he who takes this poor man's pittance and administers to him in return the desired gratification, sometimes feel, as he deposits among the proceeds of this very questionable business the price of his neighbor's comfort, and perhaps the price of his neighbor's soul too—does not *he* sometimes feel a stirring and whispering within him as if all was not perfectly right in this unequal traffic? Oh, how then at a higher bar will this business on both sides appear, considered only as the mere question of a right use of *property* is concerned in it.

4. The use of intoxicating drinks prepares men for the commission of various *crimes* against the peace and welfare of society. These crimes are so numerous and so multifarious, that to enter into detail on this subject, with the prospect of doing any thing like justice to it, would be quite hopeless. And yet this is a very important branch of the general subject; and I am sorry to feel myself under the necessity of bestowing only a cursory glance upon it. The Hon. Felix Grundy, a member of our national Senate from the State of Tennessee, and lately appointed Attorney General of the United States, and now considerably advanced in life, has publicly stated it as a fact, that in his own extensive and protracted legal practice in the criminal courts of the land, he could trace four-fifths of the crimes committed, to the use of intoxicating drinks. And probably the experience of other gentlemen in the same profession would not differ very much from his.

Now, think of all the different *crimes* against the peace and welfare of society which are perpetrated continually, and continually coming before our courts of justice, in different parts of this country, for investigation—not less than fifty thousand annually, of which two hundred are murders—and then reflect as you contemplate the dark and dreadful catalogue, that four out of five of all these murders, and these various crimes, would not have taken place had it not been for the use of intoxicating drinks. If men would not use these drinks, four out of five of these murdered persons might be annually saved from an untimely and violent death; and four out of five of those who committed the dreadful deed might be saved from thus staining their hands with blood; and four out of five of all the fifty thousand sufferers and culprits who either as plaintiffs or defend-

ants annually come before our criminal courts, would be saved the suffering and the guilt which are now incurred by them. And in such a view of the case, can the use of these drinks be right? in the eye of conscience and of God is it right? are men justifiable, in a moral point of view, for exposing themselves, or exposing others, to a participation in the crimes and sufferings thus needlessly induced upon the community? Four-fifths of fifty thousand is forty thousand—forty thousand crimes annually! about an even amount of guilt and suffering, in this land, for each successive year, occasioned by the needless practice of using these drinks. Now carry this great criminal docket up to a Supreme Tribunal, and in view of it, as exposed and laid open there before the impartial Judge and Witness of human conduct, let the question as to the morality or immorality of using these drinks be fairly tested, be finally and for ever settled; and what would that decision be? Can any man seriously doubt? Let the gratification arising from the use of these drinks be what it may, can any man vindicate this use, when out of it arise such a vast amount and complication of crimes, and when, if every man would cease to-day from the use of these drinks, this vast catalogue of crimes would simultaneously cease from the face of our land, and in all our courts of criminal jurisprudence the proportion of four-fifths of their present business would be for ever done away. How does God look upon that conduct but for which this great proportion of criminal prosecutions, and of crimes to be prosecuted, would be actually done away for ever.

5. The use of intoxicating drinks deprives a vast number of little dependant *children* of the protection, support, and education which they need and ought to receive.

These children are, in many cases, so *young* that they are unable to relieve themselves from these evils. They are obliged to suffer these evils. Their morals are not watched over; their physical wants are not adequately supplied; they are not properly fed, or clad, or schooled. Their home—a name which is wont to awaken so many delightful associations—is from their earliest years an abode of idleness, a school of vice and profligacy, and a den of untamed and felon passions. Their *father*, their natural protector, drinks himself into a premature grave, and leaves them to all the trials of early orphanage, with the legacy of a father's shame to impede their advancement in the world. Or, what is still worse, their father lives to cast the influence of a baleful example over the morn-

ing of their days. They have no regular employment; they have no suitable instruction; they have no equable and salutary restraint upon them. Their home, I say, is a den of untamed and felon passions, and the slumbers of their very cradle are amid the din of domestic broils and heaven-daring oaths and provocations. *Thus* do multitudes of children commence their physical existence and their moral course. They are accustomed to see their father, and their mother too, perhaps, using intoxicating drinks as soon as they are able to notice any thing, and they grow up towards years of understanding under these unpropitious circumstances. Prayer they never hear. Into the house of God they never enter. They are trained up to habits of indolence, profaneness, insubordination to parental authority, disregard of the Sabbath and of moral obligation in general, to the desire and practice of animal indulgence as the chief good of man, and to universal dissipation and profligacy. Multitudes of such children there are in the world; children too young and too dependant to do any thing to obviate the evils of their situation; who are, in fact, ruined before they know it or can help it. Now, let these children *die* in this situation, and come to the bar of God, and present their wretched case before *that* awful seat of justice and of judgment, and who is answerable for it? The parents, doubtless, in the first instance; but is there no guilt in this matter beyond that which the parents of these miserable children sustain? Yes; all, all who have aided and abetted these parents in the work of death are accomplices in the guilt. And does not every man aid and abet this work who needlessly uses these destructive drinks, and thereby helps to create a demand for them and to give currency to the practice of using them? Morally considered, is he not amenable at the bar of God for some share in the guilt of causing these children to experience the evils alluded to, when the whole weight of his example on this subject tended to uphold the practice of using these drinks, and to create a demand for them, and to render it gainful and reputable to manufacture and sell them? And thus, if he acts understandingly, is he not accessary to the bringing of these poor and dependant children into the situation which we have been contemplating, and over which the eye of compassion must weep.

6. The use of intoxicating drinks exposes men to become the dupes of *deceit*, and *cunning*, and *villany;* it opens the door to a vast amount of fraud being practised upon mankind. How many foolish and ruinous bargains and wagers are proposed and made under the

influence of these drinks! How much reckless and profligate speculation; of one kind and another, has the use of these drinks led to! How many has it led to tamper with the temptations which lottery-dealers hold out to the unwary! How many has it been the means of leading to indulge in the other modes of gaming, where fraud and cunning are systematically practised! How many has it led to the horse-race, and emboldened them to venture their hundreds and thousands on various and uncertain contingencies over which they had no control, amid sharpers and men of practised subtlety, strangers alike to moral principle and to the fear of God, whose professed business is deception, whose highest gratification is in the practice of successful fraud and villany! How many has it been the means of plunging irretrievably into the fascinating and guilty amusements of the theatre! And how many, when the preparatory public spectacle at the theatre was over, has it drawn away into those haunts of secret pollution, those purlieus of hell, where the lost on earth and the damned in another world, seem to be in near neighborhood to each other!

Now, in all these scenes of guilt referred to, men defraud themselves, or one another, out of *property*, and *reputation*, and *peace* of mind, and comforts of home, and hopes and joys immortal in a happier sphere. And *how*, do you ask, are they led to become the dupes and victims of such stupendous villany? how are they thus drawn in to venture and give up all, soul and body, this world and the next? The mighty spell under which they were led to do this, that deep mental hallucination which leads to these appalling results, is, in the great majority of instances, that which is produced or aided by using alcoholic drinks. Yes, it is through the use of these drinks that men are led to practise upon one another, and upon themselves, too, in many instances, these dreadful impositions. And now the great question comes again: What is the moral aspect of that practice through which and by means of which these evils are brought and fixed upon mankind to the end of time? Is it right or is it wrong to adhere to the use of those drinks which, being wholly needless, lead on to these tremendous evils? How would the use of these drinks (if we could see the proper bearing of it and the actual effects of it upon mankind through all future time and through eternity) appear to us? would it seem right? would it be approved of conscience? Judge ye.

7. The use of intoxicating drinks occasions a vast amount of

mental *inertness* and *imbecility* among mankind. Many of the brightest and most powerful minds have been entirely overthrown as the result of using these drinks. Many more are now on the downward way to the same point of utter mental prostration. Some of this latter class have but just entered the enchanted road, and are entirely unconscious of their danger. They have no thought that they have commenced a process which is destined to undermine, and cripple, and destroy their intellects, and to bring upon them the merited decrepitude of a premature old age. Some are already at a turn of life when men customarily are in the full vigor of their mental powers, bowing down under the dominion of a depraved appetite for these drinks, and giving no doubtful indications that their intellects have been paralyzed, and become torpid and inactive beyond the hope of recovery. The *extent* to which the intellectual powers and faculties of men have been enfeebled and destroyed through the use of these deleterious drinks cannot indeed be accurately ascertained; like many other points connected with this subject, it eludes investigation; but that the use of these drinks has led to the destruction of a very great amount of mind among mankind, is sufficiently evident. This waste of intellect would have been saved to the world, if these drinks had not been used; it has resulted *from* their use; it is the legitimate offspring of this *innocent* practice, as some call it, others, *harmless* gratification. Now, who shall be responsible for this work of destruction of man's noblest, best gifts from his Maker? Shall not they who *use* these drinks, and who, by their use of them, uphold the practice of continuing to use them? Is this practice morally right? will it bear the scrutiny of the last great day, when we shall all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ?

8. The use of intoxicating drinks stupifies men's *consciences*.

The power of conscience remaining still unsubdued and operative in the souls of men, is the grand safe-guard of *morals*, and the only preservative of true religion on earth. Destroy this power of conscience in the soul of man, and you take away the best safe-guard of human existence; you extinguish the last hope that men will become subjects of saving piety. Now, what must we think of a practice which tends to destroy, or at least to stupify, and blind, and pervert this whole faculty in the soul of man, and thus to deteriorate men's morals, to break asunder

the bonds of society, and ruin men's souls? Is it morally right to uphold such a practice? Is it right to give countenance, by our *example*, to those who are breaking down the barriers of morality, and fixing their hearts in hopeless estrangement from God, by having recourse to these stupifying drinks? Is it right thus to expose ourselves, and thus to aid *others* in a work of destruction? Is the *example*, christian, moral, right? And is the practice, in *any* view of it, worthy to be upheld for a single day longer? *Ought* it not to be relinquished? and when we come to stand our trial at a tribunal where the misleading influence of prejudice and passion will be at an end, shall we not *all see* that it was *not* right, and that with the light which *we now* possess, it ought never to have been allowed? and shall we not wonder and be filled with astonishment, that, under the light of *this age* of the world, the practice in question ever could have maintained itself in a christian community?

9. The use of intoxicating drinks leads to a very great destruction of *human life*, and to very great and various *suffering* among mankind before they reach the period of dissolution. The *suffering* I cannot dwell upon. It exists in almost every form: it would require volumes to describe it.

Now the great destruction of human life, induced by the use of intoxicating drinks, is a very solemn consideration in the present argument, and it deserves some serious reflection where the *blame* lies. It is manifest that this destruction of life is not *necessary*, for it is induced by a practice which is itself not necessary. It results from using, as a *drink*, intoxicating liquors. Now we wish to ascertain the *validity* of this practice. Let it then be supposed that the thousands and hundreds of thousands, and millions, and many millions, whom these drinks have been the means of sending prematurely into eternity, should meet us at the bar of God, *in a distinct and separate company*, so that we could distinguish them from all others, and should address us in some such language as the following: "We died in consequence of *using* inebriating drinks. Into the use of these drinks we were led by the fact that others used them before us, and we followed their example. Had it not been for *their* use of them, we should not have used them, and thus should have been saved from a premature death. *You* were among those through whose example we were led to use these drinks; and to you, in part, we

cannot but feel that we owe our death, and the eternal ruin of our souls." Now I beg leave to inquire again, What is the true moral character of that practice, on our part, in consequence of which, and under the light we now have on this subject, their souls were hurried into eternity unprepared, and were, consequently, for ever lost? Do you not see that that practice, morally considered, was wrong? Have you any lingering doubt but that it was wrong? Could it, leading to *such* results, and being known by you to lead to such results, be otherwise than wrong?

Once more: The use of intoxicating drinks shuts many out of heaven. Many are hindered by it from turning their *attention* to the subject of religion; and many who do turn their attention to this subject transiently, are, by the same cause, diverted again from it; and many, through the same cause, embrace false hopes of future happiness; and many more become hardened and careless profligates. They are kept, by the practice in question, from going to the house of God; they are kept, in the same way, from the conference-room and the prayer-meeting; they are kept from the company of christians, and led into other and opposite company; they are kept from serious reflection; their hearts are hardened, their consciences are seared; they grieve the Spirit of God from them; they are left to walk in the way of their own hearts; they die, and sink down to hell—and this is the result of their using these drinks. Now let us go one step further back. Who led them to use these drinks? Those, doubtless, who used these drinks before them, and who, so far as their example and influence were concerned, persuaded *them* to go and do the same thing. They were persuaded; they did the same thing; it led them to form intemperate habits; and by these habits they were, step by step, led to ruin. Now are we doing right by continuing to uphold the practice through which these souls were lost? In view of the anticipated decisions and rewards of the Judgment Day, is it right that we should thus, with our eyes open, be the means of leading souls finally away from God, and of shutting them out from his holy and happy kingdom?

Thus I have endeavored to bring the morality of the practice under consideration to the touchstone of truth and righteousness, and to show, in a variety of particulars, that it will not bear examination; for that it is demonstrably, at this day, a wrong and immoral practice:

I now beg leave, in view of what has been said in this discourse,

and of the conclusion to which we have been conducted, to bring this subject home to my audience, in two or three practical reflections,

1. Men must take care and see well to it how they allow themselves, at this day, and under the light which they now have on this subject, to continue the practice of using these drinks. If it is *morally wrong* to use them, if there is *sin* in it, it is high time to discontinue the practice, and to unite (in *form* as well as in *fact*) with the friends of abstinence throughout the world in pushing forward the great enterprise to which they stand pledged. Brethren, in the light of the conclusion to which we have now been brought, may I not say guilt is incurred by holding back from this cause; may I not say that the cause of morality and religion alike demand that we co-operate with those friends of human happiness in the great work of reform in which they are now engaged; a reform, I verily believe, which is not going to be restricted to the mere suppression of the practice we have *now* had under consideration; but which is destined to throw its correcting and redeeming influence into various other fountains of bitterness to mankind. I do believe that the cause which I am advocating is, in its various ramifications, the cause of *universal* disenthralment from vice, at least in the form of animal gratification, and from its concomitant evils—I do believe that the general cause of morality and of religion are to advance to a higher state of prosperity than they had ever attained before, in consequence of the labors and prayers of the friends of the *temperance* reformation. The vices of society are bonded and affiliated together; they form one great malign sisterhood, having a common parentage and a common influence in the work of death. And to destroy one of them is to strike a blow at the whole band. This is true in the case before us. Banish the use of intoxicating drinks from the community, and you not only put down the single vice of intemperance, but you destroy a score of other vices with it: you break up the company; you dissolve the league. It is like displacing one of the main pillars of an edifice—the whole building tumbles into ruins. But, let this pillar stand, let intemperance continue as a member of the circle of the vices, and it will be impossible to destroy the rest, and the world can never, no, never, be redeemed unto God.

2. The conclusion to which we have been led in this discourse furnishes ground for *much satisfaction and encouragement* to the *friends* of the temperance cause.

The *principle* which we have attempted to establish in this discourse is, *that the use of intoxicating drinks at the present day is, morally considered, wrong;* and consequently that to *discontinue* the practice of using these drinks is a *duty* we owe to the community and to God. If this point has been made out, I know not in what other way I can so effectually administer satisfaction and encouragement to the friends of temperance, as by simply referring them to the principle itself. To sustain you, brethren, in your work, you have high *moral* considerations, considerations of all others the most supporting and the most delightful. If it be true that you can look up to the *bar of God*, and feel no doubt of the rectitude of your cause as tested by such a trial of it, I now must say that you have a source of support and encouragement in your work, which is of transcendent value. Nor, is simple *support* and some degree of encouragement all that you have a right to feel. Why do I talk of *support* and encouragement in a cause which, according to the principle of this discourse, carries along with it the full approval of an enlightened conscience, the inward testimony of one's own sense of right and wrong, that sweetest and most delightful music of the soul. When a man is laboring to do good to others under the instinctive feelings of *pity*, and a sympathetic dread of suffering, he has in these feelings delightful helpers in his work; but when, in addition to this, *his moral* feelings go along with him and drive him on in his work with their animating voice, telling him that he is doing right, telling him that he is serving the great cause of virtue in the universe, pointing him upwards and assuring him of the approval of God, and all that love Him through the creation—Oh, when *this* is *so*, when *this* is *so*, the very decisions of the last judgment may be anticipated in his favor. So far as this matter is concerned, does it not furnish a ground for satisfaction and delight of very high value? This, brethren, is the ground which *we* have for encouragement in *our* cause. I say nothing of *success*—I say nothing of *suffering* relieved by our instrumentality. I say nothing of human beings rescued from misery on earth, and misery interminable in another world. I refer you to one single consideration, that (on the principle of this discourse) the friends of temperance are embarked in a cause, which being in itself morally good, has the approval of conscience and of God. Let *this* encourage us.

3. *Another* remark, and I have done. If the principle advocated in this discourse is correct, it opens *to you all* an interesting

mode of doing good to others, and of securing no small enjoyment to yourselves. Of the enjoyment to *yourselves* I shall say nothing. Look at the *good to others* which you may accomplish. The cause of temperance has come to be a *great* cause; it has come to possess attributes of grandeur and sublimity which very few even of its warmest friends had at first anticipated. Its growth has been rapid, and the *effects* it is destined to accomplish by-and-by, are as yet not fully in view of any of its most ardent supporters. Does any one hesitate on this point? It was but as yesterday when this cause commenced its being. You all recollect well when no such thing as a temperance society was known or thought of. Now thousands upon thousands of our countrymen are engaged in this good work; and *this* is not all; the fame of our cause has gone out beyond the limits of our own country, and England, and Scotland, and Wales, and Ireland, and France, and countries farther north, and the far distant isles of the ocean are emulating our example, and forming kindred societies, on the same principle of total abstinence. Not many years will have made their circuit before we shall hear of kindred societies in every country in Europe, and on the banks of the Ganges, under the pagodas of India, and the teeming millions of China, on the coast of Africa, and even among the red men of the western wilderness and prairies towards the setting sun. I repeat it, the cause of temperance has become a *great* cause; it has put on already an aspect of grandeur and importance which few are aware of. By-and-by its labors of love to mankind will be appreciated. By-and-by it will be numbered among the greatest and best instruments of good to mankind which this wonderful age has devised and put in operation. Now here is an opening for doing good; here is a mode of being useful and benefiting our fellow-men, which *all* may be called upon to embrace. I do, then, from the profoundest convictions that our cause is a good one, and one of commanding interest, most affectionately and respectfully invite you *all* to co-operate with the friends of this cause in its advancement. I invite you to such co-operation in view of its tendency to promote your own happiness in your hours of retirement and self-inspection. I invite you in view of the good that you may thus do to others. And above all, I invite your co-operations in view of the fact which has been the basis of these remarks, that we must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ.

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SERMON CCLXXVIII.

BY T. E. VERMILYE, D.D.,

NEW-YORK.

DEATH BY SPIRITUAL BLINDNESS.

"But if our Gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost."—2 CORINTHIANS, 4 : 3.

WE can scarcely conceive of a more affecting commission or a more terrible doom than that which Isaiah was commanded to bear against rebellious Israel, when God was about to give them up to the blindness of their minds and the hardness of their hearts. "Go and tell this people, Hear ye indeed, but understand not; and see ye indeed, but perceive not. Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their hearts, and convert and be healed." With what feelings must the prophet have borne such a commission, which seemed to leave no avenue for mercy, which by its very terms cut off all hope from his people. They were to be fatally enshrouded in that darkness they had so long courted, and were given over to the delusions they had so fearfully indulged: they were to behold the scheme of salvation unfolded before them without apprehending its import: to see all their prophecies advance to fulfilment, their law completed in the great victim to which it pointed without recognizing the Messias: they were to witness his miracles without yielding to the evidence, to listen to his doctrines without acknowledging the voice of God, to have the way of life set before them and refuse to walk therein: they were to hear the oracle of heaven pronounce their national destruction without trembling; in utter insensibility to see the sun of salvation decline and depart, to leave them in a night of hopeless desertion. And how exactly does their history coincide with these prophetic denunciations: not a link is wanting to complete the evidence of their guilt, and each event of Providence yields a tremendous attestation to the truth and justice of God. We witness their persevering rejection of the Messias, and the imprecated curse still cleaves to the nation. We behold them insensible to the warning, and they become a scattered and peeled people. "Blindness

hath happened unto Israel unto this day:" to this day they remain a living and sad memorial of the guilt and danger of rejecting the truth, and of the righteousness of God, who taketh vengeance.

No other feelings than those of astonishment and sorrow can find a place in our minds, as we contemplate this mournful example. It seems strange, wonderful, that they should thus persist in their infatuation, amidst warnings and reproofs; and the holiness and justice of God is confessed by every tongue. And yet, have we ever reflected, that under the government of the same God the same principles must still exist: that with clearer light and more impressive sanctions, the guilt and danger of rejecting the claims of the Gospel cannot be less? Have we ever thought of the solemn inference, "If our Gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost?"

Let me ask your attention to the scope and meaning of this declaration and your personal concern with it. For the sake of connected illustration, we shall consider what is implied in the subject here spoken of, "*our Gospel.*" Call your thoughts to the truth *that it may be hidden* from some; and notice *the consequences* to such; "*they are lost.*" These topics should awake a trembling solicitude in every bosom, not to be dispelled until the great question of our personal interest in the Gospel salvation is happily decided. Let us,

I. Inquire what is comprehended in the subject here spoken of, "OUR GOSPEL." The term, as you are well aware, signifies "*glad tidings,*" and in its technical use the good news of salvation to a perishing world; the revelation of free pardon and the promise of eternal life to sons and daughters of apostacy and guilt. It finds its necessity in the fact of human depravity, and comprehends all those doctrines of grace and truth which flow from God, and through Jesus Christ result in the complete salvation of sinners. "Herein God may be just, and the justifier of him who believeth." "He hath made peace through the blood of the cross; by him to reconcile all things to himself, whether they be things in heaven or things on the earth." Most emphatically, therefore, may it be styled "glad tidings of great joy to all people." The very announcement should fill the soul with raptures of love, and prompt on earth the glad response to the exulting praise of angels, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will to men." From the tens of thousands who are most interested in this divine communication, from the myriads who can be saved only by its virtue, from the captives of sin and sorrow to whom it comes as a proclamation of liberty and joy, does it demand and deserve a ready acceptance, as a message well authenticated and worthy of the benevolence of God.

But without expatiating upon its general character, let us notice more particularly some of its leading features. Recognizing, then, the total alienation of the human family from its Sovereign, which implies not merely a *liability* to sin and disinclination to holiness, but actual trangression and virulent enmity of heart against God; from this point it proceeds to teach the necessity and the fact of propitiation for iniquity, and an available righteousness through the *sufferings* and death of Jesus Christ. Let it be remembered that

the Gospel is prepared for *sinners:* it is this fact which renders it so peculiarly interesting to us; and in this view the whole revelation is to be regarded as a *remedial scheme*, a *restorative dispensation*, designed both to satisfy for transgression and also to renew us to a state of holy affections; to bring us back in thought and spirit to God, as well as to provide an atonement to the broken law. The grand feature upon which the eye fastens is this; and the mind seeks for the fulfilment of this purpose in the provision of Jesus the Mediator: this, in the expressive language of the apostle, comprises the "*great mystery of godliness:*" this originates our hopes and gives confidence to our faith, that "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing unto men their trespasses." Instead of directing the anxious mind to legal observances, by which to propitiate the divine favor, it inculcates repentance towards God, and directs it immediately by faith to Christ, "who took away sin, by the sacrifice of himself." And not more by explicit commands, than by excititing the heart to gratitude and love for such boundless favors, does it certainly lead to new obedience. Thus it divests the thought of death of its sting, the grave of its terrors, and eternity of its curse, and opens the kingdom of heaven to all believers. It renews the soul to love and duty; it revives its dying hopes; it relumines this world by the light of God's favor, and brings back primeval peace: it darts through the grave a ray that points to the kingdom of our Father: it sets over against the pains and woes of the present state an exceeding and eternal weight of glory. This is the Gospel, proffering blissful hopes while it exacts self-denying duties; and rendering the favor and fruition of God certain by the righteousness of another in the absence of all righteousness of our own. And who—what needy sinner—will not hail it, will not submit to it, will not freely relinquish all other dependence, to live by its life-giving power? What temporal boon from the hand of our God can be compared in our thoughts with this gift to the soul, "*eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord?*"

But the apostle styles it "*our Gospel.*" Not, however, with any feeling of pride and selfish appropriation, which the whole scope of the passage disproves, but in contradistinction to the schemes of philosophic teachers, and especially in distinction from the instrumentality employed under the old testament. It was committed to him and his fellow-laborers, to make it known among men; and with respect to their ministry of the truth, there was one fact which set it above all other means of instruction, the Holy Spirit wrought with them in the dispensation committed to their hands, imparting strength to their own hearts and sealing the truth on the hearts of their hearers. Hence it is called *the ministration of the Spirit;* more glorious than that of old, *the ministration of condemnation, written and engraven in stones:* for the latter was accompanied with the terrific displays of Sinai, and uttered the sentence of wrath, the former was ushered in with the mild accents of love, and made sinners alive unto God. But with respect to the benefits of the Gospel, they were not more *his* than *ours*; not more intended for Paul and his asso-

ciates and the primitive disciples, than for you and me; for sinners of every name and clime, wherever the word of this salvation is sent. It is as unrestricted as the rain from heaven, ample in its blessings as the necessities of man.

II. We call your attention to the intimation that this Gospel and all its benefits MAY BE HID, is hid from the minds of some. Would that observation did not so often seem to affirm the painful truth. The apostle makes mention of two veils which concealed from the minds of the Jews the true import of their law, and with these he contrasts the Gospel, in our text. The first veil rested on the *law* itself; it arose from the obscurity of the types and figures of that economy which were the symbols of those spiritual things the Jews were not ready to apprehend. But the second veil was on *their hearts;* it was that their perverse prejudices and corrupt affections blinded their minds to the purity of the truth and the import of those shadows of good things to come, of which the substance was Christ, and redemption through him. And the apostle would intimate, that if under the former dispensation there might have existed some excuse for the Jews, under the Gospel there could be none: there was no impenetrable veil resting on its pages: it was fully authenticated and plainly preached. Neither in the Gospel, nor yet in the method of its promulgation, was to be found the difficulty. Nothing but the *veil on their hearts* could shut out its light from any minds, and render them insensible to its claims. If any did not discern its truth, their own prejudices, their pride, their sinful lusts intervened to obscure its lustre and preclude them from its blessings. And where the same conduct is indulged among us, the same consequences must ensue.

Among the various classes who are thus blinded to the sacred oracles, there are indeed different modes by which the god of this world accomplishes his fatal purpose; though all may be traced finally to the *depravity of the human heart.*

1. *The Gospel is hid to those who deny its divine origin*, and who, impelled by the pride or the lusts of the mind, embrace instead a cold and cheerless infidelity. I say through *the pride or lusts of the mind;* for I find it impossible, after the most candid reflection on the subject, to convince myself that any other or better causes can exist as the foundation of a speculative or practical infidelity: and I never yet have read of or know the individual who could be fairly said to have come to this result from a frank and careful investigation of the subject. In the mass of unbelievers, objections and cavils are adopted, without any reasonable pretence that the evidence of the truth has been fairly examined: and in relation to such as have been truly enlightened and philosophic men, it seems not difficult, in all the instances I have known, to detect reasons of vanity, the pride of opinion, of singularity and independence of mind, or reasons of sensuality, the individual being the unhappy slave of passions and appetites which the Bible condemns, but which he could not or would not renounce. But the man who rejects revelation, the necessity or the possibility, to what monstrous conclusions

must he proceed: that the Deity who formed the spirit of man has no means of communicating with that spirit; or that no facts have arisen, none can arise in the history of the race, to prompt or demand his intervention: for man, frail, erring and helpless, there is no heavenly light and no paternal providence: he is a worshiper in a vast temple, where no divinity hears his petitions or deigns to utter responses. The man who denies revelation must not only refuse credit to all the accumulated evidence of miracles and prophecy, but must close his eyes also upon all the pure precepts, the renovating influences, the hallowed effects of its morality upon the individual and upon the social state. To his perverted vision all its most beneficent results become confusion and evil; and we can conceive the same man incapable of hearing the voice of Deity in the harmony of the spheres, blind to his glory in the noontide sun, unaffected by the loveliness of his works as he gazes on the star-spangled heavens in the midnight scene. As he becomes an *infidel* despite of the proofs of divine wisdom and goodness on the page of revelation, so may he become an *atheist* despite of the traces of an infinite, intelligent Creator on the page of nature. To such the Gospel is hid.

AGAIN. 2. *It is hid to those who make no personal application of its doctrines, and in whom it exerts no experimental power.* There is a large class of persons who professedly accredit its divinity, and in words acknowledge the truth and even the importance of its doctrines, whose belief and concern seem there to end. They have no conception of its spiritual design, nor do they seek to attain it; no conviction of the need of its experimental power, nor do they submit themselves to it. All is theory and speculation in their minds, and there it terminates; for as to personal, practical religion, a personal acceptance of Christ by faith, a personal renovation of the heart, they do not seek it, perhaps do not believe in it. Now in receiving these important truths, in exercising an evangelical *faith* upon them, we are required not merely to apprehend them by the understanding, nor to extend to them a speculative assent only, as in themselves true; but they must come with a controlling power to our consciences, must be felt as true with regard to us, and must be allowed to sway the whole soul. It is not simply that Jesus Christ came as a sacrifice and offering to make reconciliation by his death, that will save the soul: this mere fact unfelt, unappropriated, cannot impart one ray of comfort or the least hope of salvation. And they miserably deceive themselves and mistake the Gospel, who expect to meet the approbation of the final Judge by this cold acknowledgment of a Redeemer whom they have never cordially embraced, or by assenting to the shedding of that blood which they have never applied. The mind must not only comprehend the terms of salvation, but the heart must embrace them as the support of all its hopes, the consolation of every sorrow, the source of every joy: this it is to believe the Gospel, and nothing short of it deserves the name. Compare, then, the large portion of Gospel hearers with this standard, and how lamentably, even by

their own professions, do they fall short. ONE professes to believe that *a good moral life*, a decent attention to the relative duties of his station, or perhaps doing *no harm to any*, is enough. On such ground he rests his hopes: and this, too, while in a land of Gospel illumination, and professing to think highly of its benefits. But for him what need was there that Jesus Christ should make an atonement; what need has he of the Gospel at all; his virtues might exist, such virtues doubtless did exist in the pagan world, where the word of salvation had never come. He has no obligations to the Bible and the Saviour it reveals. ANOTHER, without venturing the infidel's creed, yet feels a repugnance to what is termed the *strictness* of the Gospel, and makes this an excuse for not complying with its practical demands. And ordinarily, the very point where the Gospel meets with opposition at the hands of such, is that where it claims self-denial, a submission of our pride, our passions, our souls to the authority of God, and a full dedication of our persons to his glory. They cavil at particular truths, they do not perceive the necessity of such self-renunciation, the reasonableness of such requirements. They will admit their sinfulness, but not their *total* unworthiness; the benefits of redemption, but will not rely wholly on it; the necessity of divine favor, but will not seek it with their whole hearts. And what evidence need we more conclusive than this; what can yield a more tremendous attestation to the truth, "*the carnal mind is enmity against God.*" With ANOTHER again, making, perhaps, high pretensions to reverence for religion, it becomes a matter of mere sentimentalism, and the preaching of the Gospel a mere gratification of the taste, while the heart is still unrenewed and Christ is rejected. Of intellectual hearers there are not a few such. They are pleased with the Gospel as a whole; admire its sublime truths and its general influence upon the face of society: they can perceive and acknowledge this. But when it is addressed to themselves, and urged upon their acceptance as a matter of paramount importance, they are hardly satisfied, and much less do they obey. "Lo! Son of Man, thou art unto them as a lovely song of one that hath a pleasant voice and can play well on an instrument." They applaud the Gospel as an interesting topic for the imagination; they sit, breathless with admiration, while death, judgment, eternity, heaven and hell are the themes. We may take down the pillars of the universe in their view, and introduce the last great day with all its pomp, and if this be gracefully done they will admire the power and effect. Meanwhile they have no thought of their own concern with those scenes, and the veil rests on their hearts. To all such the Gospel is hid; and, though preached with the eloquence of an angel, while they thus receive it, it can confer upon them no real blessings. Until it awakens the conscience, pervades the soul, renews the affections, extends its influence through every relation and to every act of life, until it sanctifies the heart and leads to new obedience, it has not wrought its own true effects on us; and whatever outward respect we may pay its form and demands, if we rest in this we have only the semblance and deny the power. But if,

with full conviction of our consciences that it is designed to be felt and practised, we yet close every avenue to the heart, and live as do they who confess no such conviction, how dreadfully and fatally are we deluding our souls.

III. Notice THE CONSEQUENCE. "If our Gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost." "Who destroy themselves," as the original is rendered literally, by which their own agency is denoted. The apostle, by this emphatic expression, evidently intends to refer to the final award which they will meet in the presence of the Judge. Then "the wicked shall be driven away in his wickedness." All they who may at present fall under some one of the classes I have described, may not be included in this catastrophe, for the Holy Spirit may awaken their consciences, repentance may intervene, an Almighty arm may "pluck them as brands from the burning." Yet while they live on in impenitence, and the Gospel remains hidden, they are in a lost condition; lost and insensible to all the great and valuable ends of their being, to the pure and renovating influence of the truth, to the favor of God and the comforts of his grace; *lost* as a part of the world of sinners, for whom Christ died, failing in the blessings he now confers and the hopes he here inspires. At present, in this world, they are under the frown of heaven. Nor is this all. And here we would gladly pause and draw a curtain over that scene which lies before them, and which we cannot pretend to describe. For who can tell, what language can portray the future condition through which such a soul is destined to pass; or who can conceive the emphasis of wo denoted by that word "*lost*," when it refers to the perdition the Almighty inflicts, the immortal spirit endures, and of which eternity is the duration? It is abandonment, without relief, in the hour of death to all the remorse of recollection and the horrors of anticipation: the hearing, the enduring, at the judgment, of that awful sentence, "*Depart, ye cursed:*" the passing away from the face of the Judge, from the sight of heaven, from all companionship with what is pure, and lovely, and blissful, to an inhabitation with damned spirits, "where the worm dieth not and the fire is not quenched:" the giving up of all hope, the yielding to deep and endless despair. Oh! with what habiliments of sorrow shall we clothe the universe, "with what wail of wo shall we pierce the heavens, what tears shall we shed that shall fitly mourn *a lost soul*"—a spirit on which has lighted the wrath of God for ever and ever? "*If our Gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost.*"

1. We are taught by this subject the entire sufficiency of the Gospel and its ministration for all the purposes of instruction, conviction, and conversion. Such is very clearly the thought in the mind of the apostle, and the point of the text; for the benevolence of Deity has provided this scheme, and if it fail, *men are lost.* It imparts all the information we require respecting the Divine will, and our duty: respecting the fact and the method of propitiation with God, respecting the life that now is, and that which is to come. It affords *motives* to activity, drawn from the

solemn annunciations respecting the present world, and the anticipations of the future. Earth, heaven, and hell unite to impress its calls, and fill the soul with solicitude, and excite its energies. It abounds with *means* fitted and available—the foolishness of preaching—a means, to the wise of this world foolishness, but to all sober estimation the wisdom of God—he hath appointed, to keep alive the sense of his truth, and save them that believe. And the whole plan of grace stands forth as the result of infinite wisdom, goodness, and truth. Well may he demand "What more could I do that I have not done?" Truly may he declare, "*if they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rose from the dead.*" Wisely and justly are we shut up unto the faith of the Gospel.

2. We learn the consequences that must necessarily ensue upon our neglect or rejection of the Gospel. It is left with you, as moral and accountable agents, to embrace or refuse it. Means and motives, light and authority are employed; and if all these fail, "if our Gospel is still hid, they to whom it is hid *are lost.*" How solemn, how soul-subduing the thought to him who, in the name of Jesus, proclaims, as well as to those who hear it. The object of the ministry is to arouse men from that stupor in which they neither see nor feel the power of eternal realities: to pass the magic circle of wordliness in which they entrench themselves, to lay open the folds of delusion, to start them from their insensibility, and make them know the hand of doom is on them. The minister may be found faithful to his trust, doing his work with singleness of heart; but he sees little fruit. Against the truth men are armed; to its invitations they are callous; under its convictions they nerve themselves to resistance. And what, then, is his hope or reward? He shall indeed save his own soul, and receive the crown of righteousness that fadeth not away. But as it respects those who hear, and are not saved, what is his consolation? Oh, how bitter the reply! The dreadful truth flashes on his mind, and seems to *sound the knell of souls.* "If our Gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost." And are any of you, hearers, preparing for this destiny? Are any of you making light of this mercy? Are any of you among those from whom a despised and hidden Gospel will exact so fearful a retribution? I tremble while I propound the question! Well may you tremble, if conscience charge home this guilt. For then, if you will persevere, I follow on to your dying pillow; and it is irradiated by no light, no heaven-born consolation: I think of the last groan of despair; of a judgment of condemnation, and an eternity of sorrow. Yet let me still persuade you to be reconciled unto God. Of one thing you may be certain. While the Gospel is plain and distinct in its declarations of your guilt, it is also full and free in its proffers of pardon. Whilst with most tremendous energy it enforces the necessity of reconciliation with God, it opens the avenue for your entrance. There are no barriers erected but what your own hands *have raised.* There is no obstruction but what your own hearts

cast in the way. You have been fearfully assiduous in the work of self-destruction; with appalling activity have reared the pile for the last conflagration. God grant you may not be consumed thereby. Destruction, eternal death are before you; but, in return, there is safety. You are at this moment welcome to the pardon of sin, through the righteousness of Christ. You are welcome to his name in your petitions, and to his intercessions in heaven! You are welcome to the Spirit's influence in the work of sanctification; you are welcome to all the promises of the Gospel, the prospects of blessedness, the crown of life that fadeth not away.

SERMON CCLXXIX.

BY T. E. VERMILYE, D. D.

THE GREAT QUESTION ANSWERED.

"Sirs, what must I do to be saved?"—Acts, 16: 30.

The conversion of the Philippian jailer, as narrated in this chapter, is one of the most striking and interesting instances on record of the power of divine grace, and of the sovereignty of God in the distribution of his favors. In the most unpromising circumstances, from the most unlikely characters, he calls, subdues, converts, whom he will; and, on the other hand, whom he will he hardens. As in the case of the apostle Paul and others, this conversion also was effected by direct miraculous agency; and it cannot therefore be regarded as an instance applicable to ordinary circumstances, except so far as the operations of the mind of the jailer and his convictions of truth and duty were similar to what must always exist where there is true conversion. God, in the economy of his grace, has not restricted himself to any particular class of characters or circumstances; yet the truth to the knowledge and love of which we are renewed is one, and the graces inwrought by the Holy Ghost are in all instances the same. Our text is the deeply solemn inquiry which the jailer uttered in the moment when his attention had been effectually arrested, and his soul had been alarmed, agonized, by the convictions of his guilt before God. Knowing what he did of the character and doctrines of the imprisoned apostles, it seems more natural to suppose that he had become impressed and alarmed for his eternal salvation, by the miracle he witnessed, which attested the agency of the mighty

God, than that his inquiry was prompted merely by fear of the punishment to be inflicted should he allow his prisoners to escape. The question, however, was not more important to him than to us; it respects our eternal welfare as well as his, and involves consequences of endless joy or sorrow. Oh! that we might hear from every soul, from every impenitent sinner yet in a world of hope, the earnest inquiry, "what must *I* do to be saved?" If, then, you are disposed to reflect on the things of salvation, let me ask your serious attention, while I endeavor in a very plain way to show WHAT YOU ARE NOT TO DO, and IN THE NEXT PLACE WHAT YOU MUST DO, if you would secure eternal life.

1. If you would be saved, you must *not dismiss the subject from your mind*, and entirely disregard preparation, as does the infidel, and as do multitudes of the worldly, careless hearers of the Gospel. The infidel in theory, and the latter class practically, argue that there is no danger whatever that a merciful God will not save all his creatures, and that it is therefore the most preposterous thing in the world to give ourselves trouble and uneasiness in relation to this matter: we are in no danger: all will go well; we need be under no apprehension of the future, for, from a benevolent Deity we shall certainly receive what we desire—endless happiness. Hence the notions we hear advanced, that repentance, faith in Christ, heaven, hell, are all priestcraft and delusion; and all deep anxiety for the soul's salvation is fanaticism and weakness. Thus the champions of infidelity, by ridicule and a sneer, rather than argument, strengthen their unbelief, and by plausible pretences entice the young and unwary, But whence do they derive their doctrines, except from the desires and wishes of their own perverted hearts, and in direct opposition to a clearly established revelation? And whether it be wise to trust this foundation of sand, judge ye.

The careless neglecters of religion practically adopt the same conclusions. As if life and salvation were not deserving of search, they live securely in the delusion that *all is well*, when God has solemnly declared, "It shall not be well with the wicked." To obtain salvation, it is no way to dismiss the subject from our concern, as if it neither demands nor deserves attention, and cry a delusive and soothing peace; for then "sudden destruction cometh, and they shall not escape."

2. It is no way to be saved, to silence our consciences, and soothe our souls in the deceitful opinion that ALL *are hereafter to be saved*, and therefore we need give ourselves no particular anxiety in regard to the matter. If there were to be an universal salvation of the righteous and the wicked indiscriminately, then, where is the holiness of God? What becomes of his character as a *lover of righteousness and a hater of iniquity*, which he is declared to be? What becomes of his declarations that at the last day it shall be said, "he that is filthy, let him be filthy still: and he that *is righteous*, let him be righteous still: and he that is holy, let

him be holy still?" What becomes of such declarations as these, of certain characters; "they shall *not* see life, but the wrath of God *abideth* on them?" If the doctrine of universalism be true, this declaration must be false. Of Judas it was said, "*good* were it for that man if he had never been born;" which is untrue either if he were annihilated, or if he shall at last be saved; because, at whatever period his salvation may arrive, it will be thenceforth eternal, and so positive a blessing, that it were not good if he had not been born to enjoy it. From these few texts of Scripture it is evidently no very direct way to be saved to rely on universalism, and expect that we shall come in with the mass.

But again; on this scheme there is no necessity indeed, for all the prayer, and zeal, and fear, and effort with which the Scriptures exhort us to work out our salvation. If not quite so easily, yet we shall as certainly be saved without repentance, faith, and the holy obedience of the Gospel; and it is therefore very absurd in the inspired writers to insist so very largely and constantly as they do, on the absolute necessity of these things. But while they do thus insist, it is no way to be saved to trust in this doctrine, for we have all the probabilities opposed to us. A man may possibly go over the falls of the mighty Niagara with life; would you therefore try it? But if this notion be correct, when the jailer in an agony of spirit asked "What must I do to be saved?" why did not the apostle at once calm all his fears, by simply telling him all should be saved, and therefore he was in no danger? No! this is a way to sear the conscience in sin, but not to obtain salvation.

3. It is no way to be saved to trust in *our own merits before God.* The Scriptures uniformly denounce such a reliance as that which must prove vain at last. God has expressly declared, that "by the deeds of the law (that is, by human merit) no flesh should glory in his presence." The whole Bible, from beginning to end, is levelled directly against such a scheme, and is obviously intended to abase the pride of the human heart from which it springs. "All flesh has corrupted its way before God:" "All have sinned and come short of the glory of God:" "there is none righteous, no, not one." In these very clear and unequivocal terms does the word of God denounce such a ground of dependance, and set itself directly in opposition to it. Both in its general design, and by many plain expressions, it teaches, that in ourselves we can have nothing whereof to glory before God; and it must therefore be evident that if we build our hopes for eternity on such a foundation, we shall build on the sand. We rely on something different and apart from what God has established; and if God's method be the true and only way, our hopes will sink with us to perdition. Hence we conclude, that whoever has not yet been brought to the humbling conviction of his own entire unworthiness, that he is poor and miserable, and in want of all things, is still far off from the way of salvation. And yet there is no feeling more dear to us, no delusion more common and more cherished than this, of

our own merit. It insinuates itself through all we think, and say, and do, in connection with religion, and is the leaven of hypocrisy, for ever at work, until a sovereign spirit subdues the soul. Under the dictate of this feeling, we therefore find many theological systems greedily adopted, from which the doctrine of man's depravity, the corner-stone of the Gospel system, and the doctrine of the necessity of spiritual regeneration are excluded, and human goodness is substituted. Men are led to think well of themselves, so long as they are guilty of no gross acts which will shame them before their fellow-men. A good disposition, a fair character, and a decent attention to religious observances, is their creed; and they are led to believe that if, in this way, they only do as well as they can, a merciful God will approve and accept them. But, by the side of this scheme, place the declaration which comprises the spirit of the Gospel, that *no flesh shall glory before God*, and is there not a most marked contrast? Every feeling of pride, however, either of our good dispositions or performances, partakes in its measure of this principle, and, as far as it is allowed, is a virtual rejection of the Saviour in his atoning character. He who is not humbled before God as a sinner—who has not felt and does not feel his desert of eternal condemnation, is not in the way to be saved; he to this hour needs the grand element of true repentance, the first principle of the oracles of God.

4. It is no way to be saved to depend *partly on our own righteousness, and partly on the merits of Christ.* This is a way in which various religionists strive to accommodate matters, by dividing the glory of salvation between the merit of Christ and the merits of the sinner. That man is under the influence of this delusion who imagines that he must work until he possesses a certain amount of goodness to entitle him to trust in Christ. Hence we often hear the expression, "I do not think I am yet good enough to become a disciple of Christ," which involves a total misconception of the Gospel method of salvation. He is under this delusion, who supposes he is indebted to Christ for taking away the guilt of original sin, and that now he is to merit his salvation by his own good acts. He is under this delusion, who, with an avowed trust in Christ, is attempting to blend mortifications of the flesh, if he do this as a righteousness before God. All are under this delusion, who are not brought as hell-deserving sinners, having nothing to plead, simply to cast themselves over on Christ as the only ground of pardon. Men who are instructed in the Gospel, and speculatively receive its system, do not often formally exclude Christ entirely from their scheme of belief; yet is there constant danger where the pride of the heart has not been effectually mortified, that, in the conflict between their better knowledge and unsubdued hearts, they will attempt this union of what is irreconcilable; but it is no way to be saved to rely on ourselves in any measure.

5. It is no way to be saved to *procrastinate.* Many beside the miserable Felix, when conscience has been aroused, have said, "*Go thy way for* this time, and when I have a convenient season

I will call for thee." And, like him, they have never found that season; their opportunities have never been renewed; it has never afterwards been convenient for them to repent and believe in Christ; the abused, dismissed Spirit has never returned. In a mortal malady, whatever we would do effectually, we must do immediately. In the salvation of the soul, so infinitely above any temporal good, what we would do must be done with all our might; for the opportunity may soon be gone, and that for ever. To defer it, then, until we have performed this or that business, until we have completed this or that plan, until we have accumulated a sufficient share of the world, until we shall have arrived at a certain age, is virtually to defer it for ever. When God calls, or when the Gospel offer is made to us, to procrastinate is no way to be saved: it is, in all human probability, to lose our convictions, and to destroy our souls. Had the jailer thus acted, it is more than probable we never should have heard of his conversion.

These are some of the delusions which men are apt to indulge on the subject of their salvation: they are some of the many false ways by which they hope to attain eternal life without a compliance with God's method of pardon. But in none of them, while God's word is true, can we be saved.

II. Let me point out the *Gospel method.* "*What must I do to be saved?*" The reply of the apostle recognises an immediate obligation to an immediate and indispensable duty—"*Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved.*" And this is the uniform language of Scripture. "*Repent* and be baptized every one of you for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the Holy Ghost." "Without *holiness*, no man shall see the Lord." "Thou shalt *love* the Lord thy God with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind." "Repent and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out." "Whosoever *believeth* shall not come into condemnation, but is passed from death unto life." In these brief expressions, the way of salvation is clearly, although comprehensively set forth; and by collating such passages, no sincere inquirer can be at a loss to determine what the Gospel prescribes, and what the Lord requires of him in the great matter of eternal life. It is to be observed, that where a single term is employed in any passage to denote the requisite change, such as *faith*, or *repentance*, or *love*, or *holiness*, it is very evidently intended to comprise all the rest; else neither the writers of the New Testament would harmonize, nor would the same writer be consistent with himself. The great Gospel demand summarily set forth is, "*repent and believe the Gospel.*"

1. This implies a *sincere contrition for sin, and a hatred of it.* "Sin is that abominable thing which God hates;" and we must hate it and forsake it also, if we would hope to dwell where God is. And in this demand all sin, of whatever kind or degree, is included—the sins of the heart, vile affections, worldly love, which interferes with a supreme devotion to God, not less than outward

acts of transgression. He takes a very superficial and inadequate view of this subject, and is never likely to know himself, or truly to *repent*, who flatters himself that because he is free from all outward acts of grossness, and possesses a good standing among men, therefore he must be approved by God. All this is but cleansing the outside of the cup and platter, while within it is full of all uncleanness: and we are expressly told that that which is highly esteemed among men, may often be, nay, is abomination in the sight of God. In order truly to repent of sin, we must not close our eyes against the number or real character of our transgressions, but must be willing to view them as God views them—hateful, abominable, as without palliation or excuse.

2. The Gospel demand *implies an immediate and unreserved submission to the authority of an holy God.* God does not condescend to excuse himself in any of his dealings to his creatures; certainly not to rebels. He demands unqualified submission to his government, and confession of the rectitude of all his ways, before he can accept sinners. He has done nothing, he can do nothing, but what is in itself perfectly righteous, and in conformity with his own holy nature. This sinners do not feel, and will not acknowledge really, although God's holiness especially appears in condemning sin, and punishing sinners. Here God and a rebellious world are at issue; and here God can never so far deny himself, as to yield the point of controversy to the sinner. We must then submit to him unreservedly, and without attempting to make terms different from those he has prescribed. We must adore his holiness; confess that his laws, his government, his ways are right; that if he should condemn us and cast us off, he would only do what we have deserved, and that we should have no right to complain. We must cast ourselves into his hands without limitation, and feel that if he consign us to hell, he is but just, and we are justly condemned. The feeling of soul it becomes us to cherish is this: "*thou art righteous, O Lord, when thou judgest and condemnest.*" And until we have such exercises, and see and adore a sovereign God in his holy ways, we are not in the way to be saved. God exacts this, and consistently, how can he demand less?

3. The Gospel demand implies *simple and entire reliance on Christ alone, as the Mediator;* by whose merit exclusively we are to be saved, if saved at all. This is the glory of the Gospel, and the bright and cheering hope of a ruined world: "Him hath God set forth to be the propitiation for our sin, to declare his righteousness, that God may be just, and yet the justifier of him that believeth." Yet, since the whole plan is of God's devising—is applied by his free Spirit, and is throughout of grace, we are to feel that God may withhold the blessing of faith and hope, if he please, and no injustice will be done to us, since it is only what we deserve. We come then before him as sinners deserving eternal condemnation—justifying him in what he has said, and in what he has determined to do; confessing the righteousness of his dealings, *and submitting* our souls to his disposal. But here is a way of

mercy, and this he invites us to trust. Our reliance on the merits of Christ, he has promised, shall never put us to shame; and his simple but glorious promise, we are to receive as the warrant of faith. This is to believe in Christ; it involves a recognition of God's sovereignty, righteousness, and grace—an entire renunciation of all our self-righteousness, and a consignment of the soul's best interests to the Saviour of sinners. "He who thus believes, shall not come into condemnation, but is passed from death unto life."

4. The Gospel direction implies, rather asserts and insists upon the necessity of *a life of active, holy obedience.* This it represents as the natural and necessary consequence of that repentance, faith, and holy love which it prescribes: and so intimately are they connected, that we are assured they cannot subsist apart; for "faith without works is dead, being alone." To learn the value which the inspired writers place upon a life of obedient holiness, in opposition to antinomian impiety, we have only to observe how uniformly and strenuously they insist upon it in all their writings; so that wherever else it may be imagined we obtain a release from the law as a rule of holy living, and immunity in sin as the privilege of faith, it is obvious we do not derive it from this source. Our obedience must be constant, extending to small as well as great concerns; to the exercises of the soul equally with external acts; for the law is spiritual, and our effort and desire must be to be perfectly holy, even as our Father, who is in heaven, is holy. He who allows himself in the indulgence of known sin, who does not strive and pray against it, and mourn under sin whenever it rises, gives evidence of the want of a holy state of heart. He is yet destitute of right apprehensions of a sanctified conscience. The Gospel thus points out to us the way of life, in terms not to be misapprehended by any who are at the pains to search with prayerful diligence. And he who is unwilling to pursue this high way, or from carelessness and a disregard of the lively oracles, falls into misapprehension, or fatal error, has none to accuse but himself. Repentance for sin, unqualified submission to God, faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, holy obedience, are the requisites to eternal life. He who attempts to climb up some other way, can be regarded in no other light than as a proud rejecter of the Gospel. Of all these affections and duties, *holy love* is the great actuating principle: without it, they cannot be performed in a manner acceptable to God. They all imply this affection as the source from which they must arise. "Love," it is said, "is the fulfilling of the law."

Having thus attempted in a direct way to explain what is *not*, and what *is* required of us, in order to our salvation, I proceed to offer one or two remarks.

We learn from this subject, *first*, that we have something, yea, much *to do* in this great concern. There is an idea prevalent to some extent, arising, I apprehend, from misconception often, rather than design, that we have nothing to do, can do nothing, in order to be saved. From erroneous notions of faith and grace,

men suppose they must *wait* for some miraculous agency, and that without it, this whole matter is placed entirely beyond their reach. They must *wait* for, rather than *seek* the Spirit. The obvious effect of such a notion is, to render men easy in a state of impenitence—a state of mind at entire variance from the whole teaching of the word of God, which is enough to prove the entire fallacy of such an opinion.

Yet I remark in the *second* place, to obviate a contrary error, that what we have to do is something very different from what multitudes are doing, who hope by their deserts to obtain salvation. It is totally different from clothing ourselves in the garments of self-righteousness, or trusting to an amiable disposition, a moral life, or any degree of outward religious observances. A man may be exact in all these, even to a degree of self-mortification, and yet publicans and harlots may enter the kingdom of heaven before him. These very things may be perverted to such an use as to become the great difficulties in the way of his repentance and faith. What you have to do, is without delay, without excuse, without pleading any difficulties you may imagine to lie in your way to the performance of the duty God enjoins, without attempting to compromise with conscience or with God, to *repent* and *believe* in the Lord Jesus Christ. Do you reply you cannot? but God commands it. Do you say there are difficulties in your way; you cannot yourself repent; you cannot convert your own heart? And do you ask how you are to proceed in order to remove these impediments? I answer, by *repenting* and *believing* the Gospel. God, who imposes this command, knows just where the difficulty lies; he knows the whole case; and, in the view of it all, he has shut you up to this single and immediate act; has authoritatively commanded you to *repent* and *believe*. He enjoins it with awful solemnity; suspends upon it your eternal hope, and requires it at once. Oh! do not begin to question his right, to invent apologies, to excuse your sin. "Bow, and make submission to your Judge." "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved."

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FAMILY RELIGION.

"*With thee will I establish my covenant; and thou shalt come into the ark; thou, and thy sons, and thy wife, and thy sons' wives with thee.*" Genesis 6: 17.

We have here an example by which God teaches one of the principles of his administration of grace. In the prominent dispensations of temporal good and evil towards the earlier generations of mankind, he revealed the more important principles on which his spiritual dispensations should, both then and now, proceed; and perhaps, did we read the Old Testament more for that end, we should find it a crowded record of examples, set forth in the old dispensation to be followed in the new.

The principle presented in the text is *the family covenant.* I propose to meet the covenant in the case of Noah's salvation from the flood as an illustration of God's covenant of grace in its relation to families, and to explain and recommend the privileges and the duties which that covenant involves.

"With thee will I establish my covenant, and thou shalt come into the ark; thou, and thy sons, and thy wife, and thy sons' wives with thee." God thus gave Noah a solemn and specific pledge of salvation from the flood; and this pledge embraced his family with himself. To place in fair light the

kind and the amount of instruction conveyed to us by this covenant, these four things require notice :—the ritual relations of this covenant; the matters it contemplated; the principle on which it proceeded, and the persons it embraced.

As to the ritual relations of this covenant with Noah. We have no knowledge of any dispensation of rites and ceremonies peculiar to that age of the world, and determining the form or the spirit of the covenant, or even the terms of its description. It was not a covenant of rites and ceremonies pertaining to a temporary system. In both the spirit and the form, it appertained to no changeable or occasional law; but was conducted by the permanent laws of the kingdom of grace. Like the covenant with Abraham, it was made before all ceremonial laws, and did not depend on them for its existence, its meaning, or its effects; a conspicuous and independent example of God's way of showing favour to his friends, and an example which we are taught to expect he will follow, at least as his general rule.

As to the matters which this covenant contemplated:—The favour promised to Noah and his family was a great distinction, and proper to the system of grace. This covenant was not indeed what we commonly call the covenant of grace, the covenant which makes eternal life sure to God's elect through the atonement of Christ; yet it was a covenant of grace, although it related to a temporal good. It was not as if God had said to Noah, With thee will I establish my covenant, and thou shalt come into heaven; thou, and thy sons, and thy wife, and thy sons' wives with thee. Yet the favour which that covenant promised was as really grace, as that which promises heaven to the believer in Christ. The spirit of the promise was the same. For, so far as the flood was sent to punish sin, did not the grace of that covenant promise Noah and his family salvation from a part of the punishment of sin? And it was properly deliverance, or salvation. It was not mere forbearance of God had been granted to all the generations of the human family who then had lived. Thousands of the most ungodly had been permitted to live the whole of the long term of life at that time allotted to man; and was this favour to Noah nothing but such forbearance as this?

The principle on which this covenant proceeded was the

identical principle of the Christian dispensation, although less fully developed than in after days. Though Christ was not yet slain in fact, he was in theory; and the administration of grace was conducted from the first on the principles of His atonement and mediation. Abraham saw not only Christ's day as a prophet, but also the benefits of Christ's salvation as a saint. It is only through Christ that favour has been ever shown to sinners; and the salvation of Noah from the flood was as properly a benefit of Christ's death, as was the spiritual salvation of Noah in heaven.

And the salvation was by faith. It was said of Enoch that he walked with God, and was not, for God took him. Noah, after his manner, walked with God, and he, for his testimony, was saved from the flood. And the righteousness of both of these men is pronounced by Paul, the Apostle, to be the righteousness of faith. The faith of Noah, like the faith of Abraham, was reckoned unto him for righteousness; and that alone it was that constituted him righteous before God. The covenant with Noah proceeded, therefore, on Gospel principles; bestowing a favor on Noah as a man of faith, and through the merits of that Redeemer by whom all the righteous have salvation.

As to the persons whom this covenant respected:—The form of speech in which the covenant is announced is peculiar: "With thee will I establish my covenant, and thou shalt come into the ark; thou, and thy sons, and thy wife, and thy sons' wives with thee." The covenant was with Noah in his single name, "With *thee*;" not, "with thee and thy children." Noah was the only person to whom the language was addressed; and his family are taken with him, as though they were a part of himself; and by the terms of the covenant we are led to the unavoidable belief that had the father of those children been an ungodly man, they would in their existing character have enjoyed the benefit of no covenant. This is the feature of the covenant with Noah, to which attention is here especially requested. It was a covenant with Noah alone; but its provisions extended to others besides himself; and the principle on which others enjoyed its benefits, was that of sovereign and condescending favour towards the righteous man with whom the covenant was made. No one can read this language with-

out receiving the impression that this extension of the covenant was intended as a kindness to Noah himself, by which the blessing of his own salvation might be increased by the salvation of others who were dear to him, and whose welfare could be reckoned as a reward of his own righteousness.

The benefits of this covenant reached the family of Noah through their particular relation to him. That relation was, in the first place, the relation of near kindred. The persons were his sons, his wife, and his sons' wives; the kindred of nearest degrees. Remoter relatives were not embraced. And, in the second place, they fell within that line of relationship of which Noah himself was the beginning. They composed a family of which he was the head. His brothers and sisters were not included. His father, indeed, at the coming of the flood, was dead; having been taken, only five years before, from evil to come. But he was alive, and at the head of his patriarchate, when God made the covenant with Noah, and during one hundred and fifteen years after the ark is supposed to have been begun; yet no place was provided for him in the covenant or in the ark. The only persons embraced in those gracious provisions, were persons who constituted what could properly be called his family. By the patriarchal arrangement, the branches of the family remained on the paternal estate until the death of the patriarch. To him, during his life, the general control of the household was yielded; and he, as father and head, was responsible for the proper management of its affairs. Each son had his personal rights; and exercised his subordinate prerogative in the immediate control of his own wife and children, but all the branches, with their particular and more limited authorities, in some respects like states confederate, were under the general authority of the common patriarch. Thus Noah, while his father lived, was so far considered the head of his own branch, as to admit a particular dispensation towards him and his own children; and after his father's death, still remained the head and natural representative of the household, consisting of all his sons and their families.

One circumstance of Noah's family connections ought not to escape our notice. We will not presumptuously pry into the reasons of the divine counsels in this case; yet the fact to which I now refer is fraught with instruction. The genera-

tions of Noah's near kindred were confined to a single one besides his own. His father was dead, and with the single exception of Enoch, who was translated in early life, Lamech was the first and only antediluvian patriarch who died before his first son was six hundred years old. Thus, at the time of the flood, Noah had not a single ancestor living. A still more remarkable diversion of the course of nature appears in the case of his children. Noah, of all his line from Adam, appears to have been the only father who at six hundred years of age had but three children, and those all sons. Of every patriarch till Noah it is expressly said, he begat sons and daughters. Observe, too, the unprecedented interruption of the progress of generations in the instance of his children. His sons were all married, and had formed their matrimonial connections, for aught that appears, at the usual time of life; but they had no children. The other patriarchs previous to the flood, long before their six hundredth year, saw their children's children. Adam, at a little above six hundred, saw Enoch, his descendant of the sixth generation; while Noah, at the time of the flood, sees his sons all married, but childless. There were children born to them after the flood, as the historian minutely relates, but none before.

Had now the all-wise God designed to disembarrass this family covenant with Noah from everything which might prevent its application in after ages with their modified domestic arrangements, and at the same time to relieve that righteous man from distress concerning the fate of a venerated ancestry, and of a beloved and tender posterity, the facts above stated would seem exactly suited to accomplish such a design. To save his filial affections from violence, and the covenant with him from embracing persons over whom he had no control, and in whose behalf he held no parental and natural responsibility, his ancestors were seasonably removed by a natural death. To avoid resort to incestuous connections in re-peopling the earth, his children were all sons, who had taken them wives from other families, and brought them to the patriarchal home. To relieve the covenant with Noah from concern with descendants over whose particular behaviour the ancestor of second remove could generally have no immediate influence, and in reference to whom his parental responsibility was intercepted by the in-

termediate responsibility of their own parents. A more precise adjustment of circumstances could not be requisite to adapt this covenant transaction to all ages and nations of mankind, while it afforded Noah complete relief from embarrassments otherwise incident to the family arrangements of his day.

In this covenant, moreover, Noah held to his family the relation of a representative; not constituted such, indeed, by their choice, but by the appointment of God. He was so, as it were, by nature. And this conspicuous case, with several others on record of different degrees of notoriety, would lead us to suppose, without equal or stronger evidence to the contrary, that this representative character belongs by nature to the parental relation. Is any other parental attribute more clearly designated in Scripture than this? See Adam, Noah, Shem, Ham, and Japheth, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and the twelve patriarchs, standing before God to hear the destiny of their posterity, announced as the consequence of each father's character and deeds. The father seems to have acted not for himself alone, but for his children also. In the case of Noah, of all the cases on record, the principle appears most prominent and undeniable; a clear example of all the others. The covenant is with him, in behalf of both himself and his family; his wife, his sons, and their wives, who, from their relation to him, are dear to his affections, and whose general interests are blended with his own. His children are contemplated in him. He is righteous before God, and they share the benefits of his righteousness. He stood in the covenant, not as an individual, but as father; the head of a household, to whose welfare, as well as to his own, his righteousness bore, through the grace of God, a very near and important relation. He was righteous for himself, and his righteousness availed for his family.

The conditions on which this righteousness of Noah redounded to the benefit of his children will be stated in another place. One word here on the kind of benefit they received. True, it was a temporal benefit merely; the grant of a term of years which they would not otherwise have lived. It was not a spiritual and eternal salvation; and we know not with certainty that all or any of those three men and their wives were finally saved in heaven. The particular covenant now before us did not promise a spiritual salvation. The children received

the same benefit from the covenant, on account of the father's righteousness, which the father himself received. Whether the covenant of grace with Noah, as an heir of heaven,—the covenant of which we are taking this as an example, did actually convey to his children, according to its gracious provisions, the benefits of his faith, depended on both his and their compliance with its conditions. The covenant of the ark availed for all concerned, because, as we shall hereafter see, all complied with its conditions. The covenant of eternal life avails equally for the benefit of all concerned, when its conditions are equally fulfilled. Now as to the fact of the eternal salvation of Noah's children: We have hints that both parents and children were more remiss in the duties of that covenant, than in those which related to the ark; and on account of this remissness, the benefits of the covenant with the parent may have been forfeited by the children. Unless thus forfeited, they are secure to the children; for the principles and the style of the covenant is the same, whether it relates to temporal or spiritual good. Nay, the same covenant with a parent, as the head of a household, in one prominent case promises blessings both temporal and spiritual in the same terms.

This principle of the family covenant being thus sufficiently manifest in the transaction with Noah, we will look for its appearance in other divine dispensations.

And particularly in the case of Abraham. The covenant with Abraham wears two aspects as we view it from different positions in the Scriptures: One, as the constitution of a visible church, with special prescriptions for its perpetuity; the other as a formal pledge of spiritual blessings. In the first view, Abraham and his family received an ecclesiastical organization; the covenant, or constitution extending in the first instance only to his own household. Here was presented another instance of the family covenant; precisely, in principle, like that of Noah, though relating altogether to a different matter. As the covenant with Noah brought his children with him into the ark, so the covenant with Abraham brought his children with him into the church. And the children of both these patriarchs came to their respective privileges through their father's righteousness. From Abraham downward, the hereditary right of church privilege pervaded the whole family, unless ex-

ceptions were expressly taken. Abraham had his family with him entire in the first generation, but the descent was confined to Isaac. "In Isaac shall thy seed be called." In the family of Isaac again was another, and the last selection; "as it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated." From that point the branches were left entire, and the privileges and obligations of the visible church extended through the head to all the members of the family. Nay more; If a heathen head of a family became a proselyte to the Hebrew church, he brought his family with him, and his own circumcision was a warrant for placing the seal of the covenant on every male belonging to him; and his family was thus transferred entire into the covenanted household. Thus the children even of proselytes became lawful heirs to his church estate.

This imposing example of the same principle on which Noah's family were preserved with him in the ark, shows God's esteem for the family relation. So sacred was the household tie, that the perpetuity of the visible church was established upon it; and a just and all-sufficient reason for a person's belonging to the ancient church was his belonging to the family of a church member. Such a person could not become an alien from the commonwealth of Israel and a stranger to the covenant of promise, unless, for flagrant violation of duty, he was cut off from his people.

Nor was this inheritance of outward privilege confined to the old dispensation. Suffer the little children to come unto me, says the Saviour, for of such is the kingdom of heaven. They also, when brought in by believing parents, belong to the visible church. Was not this a gathering of the children with the parents into the ark?

Among the early Christians, as at Corinth, the question was agitated, whether a husband and a wife, of whom one was a believer and the other not, ought not to separate. Paul says they ought not, and appeals to the church relation of the children to justify his decision. The unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband; else were your children unclean, that is, separate from sacred ordinances; but now are they holy, that is, fit partakers of church privilege. "Unclean" was the word which anciently signified the state of a person suspended from the

enjoyment of public privileges with the people of God; and "holy" denoted the state of one entitled to those privileges. Although one of the parents were an unbeliever, the children were not excommunicate, for the children follow the state of the believing parent, not the unbelieving. So then the covenant of church privilege is established with the believing parent, and the children come in for a share of the benefits of the parent's faith. It is the family covenant of Noah, applied to the outward privileges of the church. Thus far of the outward and temporal advantages connected with the covenant of promise.

Next, as to the covenant of spiritual favor: Abraham, as a man of faith and an heir of eternal life, had a family covenant, with conditional securities for the spiritual salvation of his seed. His faith in God was reckoned unto him for righteousness; and by his faith he was justified before God. He thus became the father of all them that believe;—the father of the circumcision, or of the heirs of his faith among the descendants of his body, and all believing proselytes who should come into the covenant family through the door of circumcision;—and the father of the uncircumcision, or those believers who should come into the christian church by the simpler rite to which circumcision should give place. The spiritual seed of Abraham were the heirs of his faith, and whether these children were raised up unto him of his own body, or of "these stones," they were all to be found in the visible church. "I have made thee a father of *many* nations." By the propagation of his blood, a single nation should be kept separate, a holy nation, a peculiar people, to which "all the families of the earth" should in process of time be joined by the propagation of his faith. Gen. 12: 2, 3. Now, the covenant, "In thee shall all families of the earth be blessed," undeniably embraces the promise of spiritual blessing—Abraham becomes the father of all these families by their coming under the church covenant as a portion of "the seed," and as professors of his faith; and in every case in which the outward profession of faith is a true index of the inward power, the spiritual blessedness is secured by that covenant. The root of the olive was planted in his family, and its fatness was to be imparted to the Gentiles, who should be "grafted in" by a profession of the faith of Abraham. A profession of faith authorized the visible

transfer of the wild olive branch to the root of the good olive-tree, where it "partook of the root and fatness of the olive;" while its continuance there depended on the sincerity of the profession of faith. "Because of unbelief, they were broken off; and thou standest by faith." Thus Abraham, with the net of his church covenant, comes in between the God of the promises and the world that lieth in wickedness, and gathers of every kind: the many who are called, and the few who are chosen; the multitudes of Israel, as the sands of the sea, add the remnant who shall be saved: all they who are of Israel, and they who are the Israel of God.

Through all this process the ingathering goes on, as we have seen, by families. The children born to a believer are not "unclean," but "holy," and come, of hereditary right, "into the congregation of the Lord." Adult proselytes from the world to the church bring their families along with them, and the family is grafted together into the good olive-tree. The question now meets us: Is there any spiritual advantage in all this? Are these initiated children more likely to be saved than others.

It appears plain that they are; and for reasons which it seems wrong to disregard. Salvation is, indeed, dispensed to sinners according to the sovereign pleasure of God, who hath mercy on whom he will have mercy. But in dispensing salvation he is faithful to his appointed methods. He saves by means, and on the conditions of his promises. His means are instruction, a religious education, and solemn impression; and the promise with its condition is, whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved. He authorizes his people to bring their children with them, as we have seen, not only to the instructions of his word, but to a share with them in the privileges of his church; and says, for the comfort and encouragement of the parents, "of such is the kingdom of heaven." His covenant admits them there. Express provision is found there for them. And if the parents who thus plant them in his vineyard train them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, are they not the more entitled to the humble hope of their children's salvation, for thus placing them in the circle of his gracious covenant? True, some brought to God are not saved. Some of them, doubtless, live and die in unbelief. But, "what if some did not believe? Shall their unbelief make the faith of God of no effect?" Because some Jews

did not believe, was there no profit in circumcision? "The faith of God;" what does that expression imply? Had God indeed made a promise which could be understood as a pledge of eternal salvation to all the children of Abraham? The Jews affected so to understand it; but they perverted the covenant, and all its gracious promises. They made the covenant embrace too many people, with too little respect for its conditions; and objected that if any Jews perished the promise would be broken. The apostle argues that the "faith of God" would not be broken; that it would be fully kept if a remnant only were saved. And the argument is an implied admission that the faith of God is pledged for the salvation of some who are embraced in the church covenant. And if of any, then of whom? Does he not regard the faithfulness and the prayers of those who guide their children in his ways; who keep the covenant on their part; who trust in his gracious promise, and plead it, and live in hope of its fulfilment? We are surely entitled to the comforting belief that the eye of his electing love is upon the children of such prayer, and faith, and hope, and that these precious fruits of the Spirit, brought forth in the parental heart in relation to the dear objects of natural affection, will, by virtue of the gracious covenant, and by the same Spirit, be propagated in the hearts of the children, to the joy of the parent and the children's eternal salvation.

In the glorious scene of the day of Pentecost the family promise appears. "Repent," says Peter, "and be baptized, and ye shall receive the Holy Ghost. For the promise is to you and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call." Most remarkable terms! But what had that convicted assembly, in that moment of their own anguish, to do with a promise to their children? And what had those Jews from all countries to do with a promise to Gentiles, mentioned as afar off? It was due to them that the Gospel principle of gracious dispensation should be early and clearly stated. And it is this: The promise is to you, [Jews,] and to your children, and to them that are afar off, [Gentiles,] and to their children: (for so the expression is to be filled out,) even as many as the Lord our God shall call. Here an evangelized Jew, familiar with the Old Testament language respecting the call of people by families, well acquainted with the history of Noah, whose case he afterwards quoted in one of his epistles, now a preacher of the Gos-

pel, full of the Holy Ghost, stands before a multitude of awakened sinners, whom, as he supposed, the Lord his God had called, and declares that the promise of the Holy Ghost is to them and their children. As Abraham had a promise to him and to his children; as Noah had a promise to him and his children; so "the promise of the Holy Ghost" is to believers and their children. On this principle the apostle seems to have practised. When we see Paul baptizing the jailer's family at Philippi, we seem sure that he had taught that father the pentecostal doctrines of Peter; "the promise is to thee and thy children." And so also when at Corinth, he baptized the household of Stephanas.

Let the christian father who seeks encouragement in training his children, look at righteous Noah leading his household into the ark, and saving them from the overflowing destruction by the sensitive and tender cords of his own faith. Let the flood represent the final wrath of God against the wicked; the ark, Christ, the sinner's refuge; the covenant with Noah, God's gracious covenant with parents; the faith of Noah, the faith of a parent in the covenanted mercy of God; and may we not trust that as Noah's faith and his leading his family into the ark were the means by which electing mercy came to his children, so the humble faith of a christian parent, and faithfulness in teaching the children the ways of the Lord, and commending them to the mercy of his covenant, will be the means of bringing salvation to the children. Christian parent, try it and see the result. Think not lightly of this covenant till, after thorough trial, you have proved it inefficacious. It is easily overlooked. Some despise it openly, and are bold enough to denounce, as a human device, the admission of children to any covenant privileges. But with such examples and such precepts before you in the Bible, can you think lightly of this doctrine of the family covenant? Let your children come with you to the altars of the Lord, as set apart to him, not "unclean but holy," with the sign and the seal of God's gracious covenant upon them. Spend your days in pleading with God the promises of that covenant, and with them its obligations; and then if your doctrine prove a delusion, and the children of your love, of your faith, and of your prayer must perish, their ruin cannot have been caused by your mistake. Your error will be found harmless and safe. But if this covenant of God be in force, and his people, by their neglect of it, render

it of no effect, wo to those children on whom the final consequences of that neglect shall fall.

Some parent, perhaps, may retire from the contemplation of this part of the subject, with something like the following lamentation: If these things be so, I was born in the visible church; was solemnly given to God by my parents, who bore me in the arms of faith to his altar; I held by inheritance a title to a share in the outward privileges of the church; I was a child of prayer; but by my own persevering unbelief and impenitence I am cutting myself off from the congregation of the Lord, and becoming a voluntary alien and apostate. And here are my children, whom I am separating from the covenants of promise with myself. I tremble under such responsibility; for it must be a heavy and a bitter curse that falls on him who interrupts the succession of God's covenanted generations.

SERMON CCLXXXI.

BY REV. J. W. YEOMANS.

FAMILY SALVATION.

And Noah went in, and his sons, and his wife, and his sons' wives with him, into the ark, because of the waters of the flood."—Gen. 7 : 7.

The family of Noah, as we have seen, enjoyed a precious fruit of their father's righteousness. It was to them an inestimable blessing that their father was a man of faith. When the God in whom he believed proposed to make his case a permanent example of the favor to be hoped for by the righteous, he put the children with the father in the provisions of the gracious covenant; and they received a benefit of the father's righteousness on the ground of their relation to him.

How happily does the spirit of this covenant agree with the lively sentiments of natural affection in the heart of the christian parent. Had Noah been chosen alone to that salvation, and had his family been left involved in the perdition of the ungodly world, while his faithful instruction and their faithful obedience had been the same as it was, what a scene had been presented in that household at the moment of the parent's supposed final separation from the children! There was a tender element in his fatherly love which came not from the tie of blood. His children were pious towards their father, if not towards God; and this filial piety, while without the father's faith it could stand them in no stead before God as a ground of their salvation from the flood, did nevertheless prove the delicate line by which the father's faith led them into the ark. And how tenderly did it endear them to him! They had been the objects of his pious care. Their welfare had engaged his anxious concern. Their character was, under God, the creature of his own influence. He had prayed with them. He had prayed for them. He had instilled into their minds the doctrines of his own righteousness.

They, by their father's counsels, had kept themselves from the abominations of the world; and seemed willing, as their history shows, rather to adhere to his doctrines and go with him into the ark, than to take their chance with the rest of the world. How the objects of such affection and such care entwine themselves around a parent's heart, a parent only can know; and that parent only whose tender devotion to his children is sweetened by an equally tender devotion to God. What hopes of future fruit from such culture! How precious that field where he has sown in such tears; the field which he had fenced and guarded from the tread of the destroyer, and in which he has watched day and night for the springing of the precious blade! To see such a field deluged with the waters of a premature destruction were an infliction which could not come upon so devoted a friend of God, except for palpable reasons. Imagine him tearing himself away from his weeping family, to go alone into the ark: My children, you hear him say, I have been warned of God that he is about to destroy the world by a flood. By his direction I have built this ark, in which he has promised to save my life. I have taught you the duty which God requires of you. I have prayed for you. You have witnessed my labor and expense in building this ark; you have approved them; you have joined me in them; and have cheerfully consented to this application of property, which, had you survived my decease, would have fallen by inheritance to you. But I have received no command to take you with me into the ark. And although, in the sorrow of my fatherly heart, I could wish to die for you, or even with you, yet I go myself into a safe refuge from the storm and the flood, and must resign you to destruction.

Could such a scene be looked for under a dispensation of mercy; and in a case, two, where kindness to a beloved friend is the sole and professed reason for the act, and where the faithfulness of that friend in all his duties as a parent is openly approved? What violence, without cause, to those profound and sacred sentiments of parental love implanted by God's own hand in the bosom of man; sentiments which in no degree of their power is the offspring of evil in the heart; nay, which are increased in their very tenderness by the spirit of devotion which God approves. To torture thus the spirit of a godly

man, who it would seem, had nothing for which to reproach himself, nothing for which God upbraided him in the matter of parental duty; whose children, by their dutiful compliance with his commands in the matter pertaining to the covenant of the ark, had knit themselves with every fibre of his fatherly heart; we say not by any means that Noah could in justice claim better treatment at the hand of God, but we do say it seems not like the manner of the grace of God. Such are not the tender mercies of the Lord. He professes to regard the affections of nature in the hearts of his own children and shapes the methods of his grace to his schemes of creation and providence.

The principles on which this act of divine favor proceeded from father to son claim here to be carefully traced. It does not appear that Shem, Ham and Japheth would have been saved from the flood had not their father been a righteous man. It is not said that they were righteous before God. It is not intimated that they were consulted in relation to the covenant; or that the covenant was made *with* them in any personal sense. It was for them, but with their father; in the whole transaction he was their representative; and his righteousness was so imputed to them, that provision was made for them in the ark as though they, like him, were righteous. All was done through him, and in his name. This seems the true representation of these transactions.

The *natural* bond which bound them all together in the bundle of salvation was the bond of parental and filial love. Had Noah felt for his offspring no love, tender and chastened by the power of his pious faith; or had his love been less; or had it been only a selfish and depraved affection, which often in this world goes by the sacred and much abused name of parental love; or had he exercised his affection in a less religious treatment of his children;—then, if ever himself could have been saved as a righteous man, he could not have such hope for the salvation of his children. The cords of natural affection became, as it were, conditional conductors of divine favor to the children, and the conditions on which that favor was transmitted now demand our attenttion.

I. An evident condition on which the family of Noah were embraced with him in the ark, was his faithful instruction and

his parental control. That in both these respects Noah did his duty to his family, is clear from the result. His children agreed in their views of truth and duty with him, and not with the rest of the world. They all went with him into the ark. They consented to their father's faith in relation to the coming of the flood; and since God had warned him, and he believed God, he warned them, and they believed him. He was not so fearful lest his children should not be free and rational in adopting their opinions that he could not teach them his own; but, sure that opinions which were safe for him would be safe for them, he did not hesitate to instil his doctrines into their minds.

This word *instil* is intended here to denote much more than to *recommend*. The teaching of the parent implies a more powerful influence than mere explanation and recommendation. There is a theory which forbids a child to be taught truth any faster than he can comprehend the evidences of it; which brands as evil prejudice all belief not founded on the perception of evidence. But of this theory the practice of mankind is, and must be, a perpetual contradiction. If a child were not permitted to believe and practise upon philosophical truth till he could perceive and weigh its evidences, how long in this world could he live? And is there no religious truth sufficiently fixed and certain for a child to receive and act upon under a parent's direction? The precepts of the Bible presume that there is. The laws of nature, which control the parental relation and dictate the parental duties, proclaim that there is; and these all assert that the parent is bound to find out truth for his children, and teach it diligently to them.

The reason of this duty is founded in the natural right and power of parental control. The parent can teach with authority; and he is the only human teacher who can. The preacher before his congregation can only explain and prove truth, and recommend it by consideration of the property of which every hearer claims and exercises right to judge for himself. But the parental prerogative controls the child's opinions; and if, by skill in governing his child and guiding his early thoughts, the parent can mould his child's opinions according to his pleasure, no natural rights of the child, no power, either civil or ecclesiastical, can properly interfere with his privilege. He

holds the unquestionable right to command his child in the way which he conscientiously believes to be duty. He is the first judge of his child's duty. And for the successful exercise of that right, his relation to the child affords the most important faculties. The child is cast at his birth upon his parent's care. He has at first no more of opinion or knowledge, except what he receives from the parent, than he has of liberty or property. He receives truth and acts upon it without examination, without a glimpse of evidence, and even without knowing the connection between truth and the evidence which supports it. At this point of first impressions the power of the parent over the child's impressions is almost absolute. No power of one finite mind over another can be more complete. Here is the beginning of the system of parental control. It is the power of the parent over first impressions. He has his children so much at his command that he may justly be responsible for their opinions, as he is for his own. And when right principles are thus early inculcated, the parent has great advantage over the maturer years of his offspring. In Noah's family we have remarkable evidence of his faithfulness. Those three sons and their wives honored their father's faith, and submitted to his direction. During those long hundred and twenty years, while their father was spending his time and his substance on that immense ark; while the changes of nature went quickly on around them, and all things remained as they were from the foundation of the world; while all the world besides were perhaps deriding him; his family clave to his interest, and shared in his reproach; and he led them all into the ark, amidst the scoffs of the ungodly neighbours, and under as bright a sun, perhaps, as ever shone.

This fact declares a volume on the subject of parental control. Let us learn a lesson from it. "Thou shalt come into the ark, and thy children." Had Noah sacrificed his control over his family to a vain ambition to have them appear independent and high-minded in the world, they might not have been saved. They might have refused to come with him into the ark. The management of the family in this matter is committed to him. God commands him, and leaves him to command his children. And by a strict and wise parental discipline he so commanded that not one disobeyed.

Would a parent know what things they are which he is bound to teach his children? They are the things which he thinks it safe and proper for him to hold himself. The parent should find out the truth for himself and them. He has more than himself to provide for. The word of God to every parent, like the word of Noah, is intended for the children likewise. Alas, then, for those children whose parents have no word of God for them; no covenant of God to commend to them; no influence over their tempers and dispositions to keep them out of the world of wickedness.

Would the parent know how far he may trust God in relation to the salvation of his children? Trust in proportion your own faithfulness. Do you keep your children under your authority and care? Do you hold what you humbly and prayerfully believe to be the truth; and thus do you teach your children your own doctrine, or do you employ others to teach them theirs? Who are they, christian father and mother, whom you are permitting to give the first religious impressions to your dear children, concerning whom God hath a covenant only with you? Do *you* teach your children their duty, or, teaching them nothing yourself, do you send them elsewhere to be taught? If you shun the labor and the responsibility of teaching your children yourself, and substitute other influences over them for your own, you know not whither those influences may lead them; and how can you cherish a more rational faith for their salvation than you could for your own while you neglect the means of securing it?

Would the parent know what faithfulness to his children is? Noah guarded his family effectually against the seductions of the world. He was not, we may presume, particularly anxious lest his children should not learn the ways of the world, and be familiar with every fashion and folly of the day. Very possibly they were thought less accomplished than many of their neighbors; less versed in the arts of fashionable life; and less practised in the superficial forms of refinement as it sometimes prevails; but then they were saved from the flood; a distinction which, in the end, their scornful superiors might have envied; a happiness which both themselves and their father considered a manifold compensation for the refinements and the empty pleasures they had forsaken. Let every chris-

tian parent guard with special care his influence over his children. It is a precious trust. It is easily and often betrayed. Yet happy is he whose children are so completely under his pious control that they will believe with affectionate promptness on the credit of their father's faith; that they will understand and respect their father's opinions and his pious practices; and not give themselves away as captives to the power of the vain and wicked world in spite of his parental care.

Then would the parent know what to expect as the good effect of his faithfulness. Expect to see your children grow up with a filial reverence for your doctrines and your religious ways; prepossessed in favor of the faith their father cherished, and of the life he lived. They will have your religious opinions, instead of none at all. They will incline to your modes of worship and your church, instead of being distracted among many, or disinclined to all. If they wish to investigate truth for themselves, as, if they are rightly trained, they doubtless will, they will have some opinions which they will respect for their father's sake, and which they will hold till they find those that please them better; instead of having no fixed opinions, and being, from a dissipated and unsettled habit of mind, averse to adopting any. It is a sad misfortune for a family of children, when the parents differ in their religious views; one belonging to one denomination, the other to another. The manifest and mournful effects of this diversity on the religious character and prospects of the family deserve to be held up as a solemn warning to those who are forming the marriage connections. The evil of such difference of religious faith between parents, however conscientious and kind, is exceedingly great. To the children it is next to no religion at all. Let parents who thus differ with each other, weigh the consequences to their offspring, and consider whether conscience in respect to their children's welfare be not as solemn a matter as conscience respecting their own sectarian peculiarities; and whether they ought not, for conscience' sake, on some terms to agree. It is a solemn subject; and the best way to escape difficulty in the case is to shun the unequal marriage connection at the outset.

The consequences of defective discipline will appear in the irregular habits of the family in respect to religion. Has the

christian father too little influence to command the presence of his family at daily prayer, or to take them with him to his seat in the house of public worship, let him not wonder, if before he dies, he sees his children running, with a giddy curiosity, after doctrines which he disbelieves, and failing under an alien influence stronger than his own. Wo to them, and unhappy for him, if, when the flood is about to come, and he calls his family to go with him into the ark, he finds he has no influence over them, and they will not come. In such defects as have now been mentioned may we look for those influences which sunder the ties of religious unity into households; which leave them to fritter into separate and volatile particles with every wind of doctrine and slight of men, and make in some families as many denominations of worshippers as there are individuals who worship God at all. Thus far of the covenant obligations of the parent.

II. Let us turn to those of the children.

It was the part of Noah's children to receive his word on the subject of the flood, and act upon it, with all submission. He was their appointed teacher; and unless they could discern such signs of mental infirmity in him as might neutralize his counsels, it must require the strongest evidence to set his instructions aside. There is but one condition on which the child may righteously disregard the conscientious and pious teaching of a parent. It is when, with equal conscientiousness and piety, the child has formed opinions and chosen practices which seem to him more agreeable to the will of God. Otherwise he slights his father's counsels at his peril.

Let the question then be put to those sons and daughters of sainted faith and love who were brought in infancy to the altars of God; whose infant helplessness was borne up by hands spread forth to heaven in prayer; whose infant smile was courted by lips on which the name of Jesus rested, and whose cradled slumbers were invoked by sounds of melodious devotion;—you were warned, as you grew up, of the wrath to come; you were shown the ark of safety and the way to enter it;—Have you held by your parents' counsels? If not, have you formed a conscientious judgment that their way was wrong? Have you searched out better doctrine than they held; or better rules of life than they followed? You have now perhaps families of your own. *Your*

infant sorrows were soothed by the song of christian faith, and hope, and holy joy. Do you sing a sweeter song over the cradle of your own offspring? *You* were brought to the holy altar of the God of mercy, and devoted to him, and commended to his mercy. Have ye renounced that parental vow as unlawful, unjust, and impious, that now, when your assent to its obligations is sought, you will not give it; that, when exhorted to the adoption of your parents' faith, you will not yield it? And as to your own children—have you bound them to a holier altar, or devoted them to a better Master? The simple prayers, dictated to your lisping responses as you sank into the placid slumbers of every night—you do not teach them to *your* children. Did they do you harm? Have you found out something better; some softer, purer charm, with which to tinge the calm and mellow verge of your children's repose? You do not read the word to your household, nor lead them daily to the throne of grace. How is it that you can swerve so deliberately from the way in which you were brought up; that you can withstand the influence of those fatherly and motherly instructions, and break in upon those solemn associations that governed your childhood and youth?

It was the part of Noah's children to approve, maintain, and obey the religious regulations of their father's household. The family must be unanimous. They must follow him whose faith brings covenant blessings to them. Think of those sons of the pious patriarch, hoping to be saved from the flood, yet stealing away from the paternal roof at the hour of prayer, and holding their fathers' devotion in contempt. Or, if each had his household apart, imagine them taking wives who disagreed with them in their religious views, and would not join their religious exercises; and then with their wives forsaking the established and familiar household practices of their father. Would any one suppose that the faith of a common parent was bringing these dissenting children with the compass of the same divine favor; that they were about to enjoy a common deliverance from the flood by virtue of their father's faith?

Yet such unhappy families are not unknown. The parents, perhaps, are conscientious and tender of their children's welfare; but lacking skill and decision, they lose control over their children as they grow up. The children freely indulge their propen-

sities; learn to be everywhere else more than at home; contract a disrelish for their parents' religion; and then, being repelled by the very appearance of the needful restraint, they acquire a disgust for family religion, and a feeling of excuse for hating it on account of its repulsive aspect. The stale proverb that children of the strictest families are the most wayward of all, has its origin in these failures. It is the *kind* of restraint, not the *degree*, that is defective. It is an outward force, which does not subdue the spirit. It applies a momentary strain to the stubborn will; but leaves it, when the force is removed, to return to its natural state, like the drawn bow, with a violence the greater for the greater restraint.

I appeal to those sons and daughters now grown up, who are called together morning and evening to the reading of the Scriptures, and to prayer: Do you cheerfully obey the summons? Is that obedience your delight? Or having gone from your father's home to your own, do you there call on the name of the Lord? If not, how can you so widely depart from your parents' ways, against reason, affection, and conscience, and set up a prayerless household, such a household as you never lived in till you made it for yourself?

It was the duty of Noah's family to follow his personal example of pious obedience. This, in the matter of the ark, they did. They forsook all, as he did, at the word of the Lord. We hear no more murmurings amongst them against the expense and labor of the ark; no remonstrances against what the world might call the foolish enterprise; no hesitation in following his direction and example throughout. God said to Noah, Thy sons, and thy wife, and thy sons' wives shall go with thee into the ark; and they went,—a striking instance of filial submission. Noah forsakes all at the word of the Lord, to go into the ark, and seek salvation in the appointed way. His children forsake all, and go with him;—a pattern of obedience for all children of the covenants of promise. Christian father and mother, may it be yours, through the grace of God, to command your children in the ways of the Lord's covenant, and to see them obey.

And lest you lose this blessedness, take warning from the notorious cases of failure recorded for your admonition. When the determined overthrow of Sodom drew nigh, Lot was chosen to be saved. But how fared his children. Two of his daughters

were married to Sodomites, and when their father received the heavenly warning and ran, in his fatherly yearnings, to warn them, they would not hear. They were earnestly inquired after by the angels: "Hast thou here any besides? sons-in-law, and thy sons, and thy daughters, and whatsoever thou hast in the city." He hastens to his daughters and their husbands: My children, the merciful Lord inquires particularly after you, because you are mine. "Up, get ye out of this place, for the Lord will destroy it." "But he seemed as one that mocked unto his sons-in-law." Here was one father's influence over his children. He himself and his unmarried daughters were saved, "yet as by fire." But what was the end of those other children?

And where found he those sons-in-law when he went to call them? In the haunts of blasphemy, think you not, and of drunkenness, of gambling, and of the nameless abominations with which Sodom abounded, and which caused its overthrow? Where were those children when their father was at prayer, deploring before God, in the grief of his righteous soul, the awful wickedness of the place? And where spent they their sabbaths, while their father, in his solitary sanctuary, was engaged in calling on the name of the Lord? The God of mercy has left this awful example on record as a warning for all. May the warning be effectual.

In these Gospel days, the children of believers are children of the covenants of promise. The parents having become proselytes to the christian faith, transmit as a kind of spiritual inheritance to their children, a share in the privileges of the visible church. Before the souls of these can perish, these high privileges must be forfeited, and all their benefits spurned. If such hearers of the Gospel are lost, if the heirs of such honor come to shame and everlasting contempt, let them consider what an estate they will have squandered, and what a family title will be buried with them in the grave of their perdition.

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SERMON CCLXXXII.

BY REV. EDWIN F. HATFIELD,

NEW-YORK.

THE CLAIMS OF MUSIC.

"Make a joyful noise unto the Lord, all the earth!
"Make a loud noise, and rejoice and sing praise.
"Sing unto the Lord with the harp;
"With the harp, and the voice of a psalm;
"With trumpets and sound of cornet,
"Make a joyful noise before the Lord, the King."—Ps. 98; 4–6.

"It is good to sing praise unto our God; for it is pleasant, and praise is comely." The voice of joy and the shout of gladness are the proper welcome of a great and gracious sovereign. The loyal heart will exult in the presence of its king. So exults the saint in the presence of Jehovah. "Great is the Lord," he exclaims, "and greatly to be praised." His heart leaps forth in songs of gladness, and rejoices in shouts of triumph. "I will extol thee," he cries, "my God, O King! and I will bless thy name for ever and ever. Every day will I bless thee: and I will praise thy name for ever and ever." As the exultation of his soul increases, and he feels how poor, how faint, how worthless are his own powers of praise, he calls on all the saints, on all the world, on "every thing that hath breath," on all creation, to swell the shout, and "praise him," their God, "according to his excellent greatness."

Thus David felt, and his bursting heart spake out. "O clap your hands," said he, "all ye people! shout unto God with the voice of triumph." "Sing praises to God, sing praises; sing praises unto our King, sing praises: for God is the king of all the earth: sing ye praises with understanding." "Make a joyful noise unto God, all ye lands! Sing forth the honor of his name, make his praise glorious." "Let the heavens rejoice,

and let the earth be glad: let the sea roar, and the fulness thereof; let the field be joyful, and all that is therein."

Let heav'n and earth with rapture leap,
Let seas their voice employ;
Let ev'ry height, let every deep,
Let fields and woods exulting keep
A jubilee of joy.

In such a work no power of the human soul should be unemployed. Everything that can excite the sacred merriment of the heart—everything that can help to swell the sound of joy must be brought forth. "Praise him," therefore, he exclaims, "with the sound of the trumpet: praise him with the psaltery and harp: praise him with the timbrel and dance: praise him with stringed instruments and organs: praise him upon the loud cymbals: praise him upon the high-sounding cymbals: let everything that hath breath praise the Lord."

Praise him with the trumpet's tongue,
Far and wide resounding:
Praise him with the harp well strung,
While your hearts are bounding;
Praise him with the sweet-toned lyre,
Let his praise the lute inspire,
Praise him in a mighty choir,
Let his praise be loudly sung.

Praise him with the viol's strings,
Waking joyous feeling;
While the vault of glory rings
With the organ's pealing;
Let the cymbals ring his praise,
Wake the clarion's grandest lays,
Shouts let ev'ry creature raise,
And proclaim him—King of kings.

Such was the soul of David—such, when he breathed forth the inspired language of the text.

As David felt, so should every ransomed sinner feel. They who, like David, as they turn their eyes backwards, can say, "I waited patiently for the Lord, and he inclined unto me, and heard my cry; he brought me up also out of an horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock, and established my goings"—can also say, "and he hath put a new song in my mouth, even praise unto our God." Such are called upon in the inspired language of the text, to engage, with all their powers of voice and heart, in celebrating the praises of their God. More forcibly to impress on all such the exhortation and requisition of the text, allow me to speak of

The origin, the history, the duty, and the uses of sacred music.

Let us then direct our enquiries to

I. The Origin of Sacred Music.

Music has no human father. It claims to have descended from the skies. Man has invented, it is true, ways and means of rendering music more expressive. To Jubal, the sixth in descent from Cain, is accorded, by the inspired record, the high honor of having been "the father of all such as handle the harp and organ." But who was the father of song? From whose prolific mind proceeded first the enchanting ode?

The origin of music is coeval with the human race. It is to be found in the very elements of the human soul. Man is the creature of thought and feeling. He came from the Creator's hands with a heart susceptible of an almost endless variety of emotions, and with the faculty of giving expression to them, so that each emotion might be distinctly known. These emotions may be perceived by the eye, in the diversified aspect of the features of the face, or in the position and posture of the whole, or a part of the frame. It is the ear, however, which most readily perceives, in the accents of the voice, the state and changes of the heart within. All animals to whom God has given the system of respiration, or in whom the lungs and larynx are found fully developed, are possessed of the faculty of voice. By various modifications of these organs, by the expansion or contraction of the lungs, the increasing or the diminishing of the length of the larynx, or wind-pipe, and the action of the epiglot, or covering of the wind-pipe, a great variety of tones may be produced. These tones, by constant and uniform association, become the well-known signs of a particular emotion, or feeling of the heart. Joy and grief, love and hate, hope and fear, peace and rage, contempt and pity, all have their peculiar tones—tones as universally understood as anything whatever pertaining to man. These tones have no provincial meaning: they are nature's language, common to man in every clime and age; and many of them not peculiar to him, but serving as the medium of thought even in the brute creation. These sounds can never fall upon the ear so as to be perceived, without exciting within the human soul the idea of a particular emotion.

> "There is in souls a sympathy with sounds;
> "Some chord, in unison with what we hear,
> "Is touched within us, and the heart replies."

These varied tones of nature are the original elements of music. A combination of these tones after some order, more or less prolonged, is the germ of music—a germ that existed in the first thing that had breath, as soon as it began to breathe.

To arrange these tones in an orderly manner, so as to reduce music to a science, must have been the work of time. And yet scarcely any time could have elapsed after the creation, before the atmosphere was filled with the sweetest music. No sooner had the lark sprung forth at its Maker's word, than it soared

aloft, and poured its sweetest strains upon the air. Every bird became a warbler, ready-taught to join the choir of nature—the vesper-hymn at the first going down of the sun—the symphony in the anthem of "Creation." Thus ended the fifth day of the Creator's work. And when on the sixth, obedient to its Lord, the dust of the earth assumed the human form, and receiving the breath of God, became a living soul, the first accents that fell upon the human ear were of the sweetest music, and the first promptings of man's exulting bosom must have been to join the universal choir. As he gazed on the paradise that spread itself over the earth, and lifting up his eyes to the firmament, beheld the glories of the azure heavens, his soul must have kindled with adoring love and gratitude to God. And this must have been a feeling too sacred, deep, and overpowering for the tame and spiritless enunciation of mere words. The lofty song, in all its grandeur and sublimity, can alone unburden such a heart.

Thus the first human pair, before the close of the very day of their creation, must have joined in devout and joyous ascriptions of praise to their bounteous Lord. The first music of the human voice must have been a holy exercise. Sacred song is as ancient as the creation. It holds the precedence over every other. It is the eldest born of all the daughters of music.

But man was not the first to cultivate the sacred art. It was not on earth alone that sweet voices were heard, as the Creator "spake and it was done." "The morning-stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy." Why may not that angelic chorus have been heard in Eden, and its blissful notes prolonged by human tongues?

"In heaven the rapt'rous song began,
"And sweet seraphic fire
"Through all the shining legions ran,
"And strung and tun'd the lyre;
"Swift through the vast expanse it flew,
"And loud the echo roll'd,
"The theme, the song, the joy was new,
"'Twas more than heav'n could hold."

In that day, when even the Creator himself walked and talked with his earth-born children, the intercourse of the angelic race with the holy inhabitants of Eden may have been vastly more familiar than is usually conjectured. Milton, in his immortal poem, has taken up the thought, and presented us with the beautiful idea of Adam and Eve catching their accents of praise from angel-lips and harps. Adam, as an introduction to their evening worship, thus addresses his beloved spouse:

"How often from the steep
"Of echoing hill or thicket, have we heard,
"Celestial voices to the midnight air,

" Sole or responsive to each other's note,
" Singing their great Creator ! Oft, in bands,
" While they keep watch, or nightly rounding walk,
" With heavenly touch of instrumental sounds,
" In full harmonic number join'd. their songs
" Divide the night, and lift our thoughts to heav'n ?"

It was reserved, doubtless, for a later period to introduce much of what is now regarded as essential to music. From the love of order, which in some degree is natural to man, would proceed a measured division of time in the enunciation of each note ; and thus rhythm would become united with melody. Language, too, as one of the modes in which feeling is expressed, would soon be connected with the tone, and, uttered in a measured division of time, would give rise to the idea of harmony. Then followed, perhaps, the union of two or more voices, producing, in perfect accordance, sounds so kindred as readily to flow together and gratify the ear. In process of time, new combinations of sound would be produced and scientifically arranged ; harmony would become more various, extensive and perfect ; language more rhythmical, or better adapted t o the purpose of song ; instruments invented to aid the voice : and thus music would become more and more a perfect expression of the soul.

II. The history of sacred music may next claim our attention. As no nation has yet been found without some kind of religion, so none are known to exist that do not employ music in some form as a part of their religious worship. In all ages, and among all people, it has been regarded as a most appropriate vehicle of praise. There is much reason, as we have seen, to believe that the practice of sacred music began in Eden. That it soon became widely spread appears from the fact, that instrumental music was invented and brought into use long before the deluge. Favored as we are with only fai glimpses of the first 2500 years of the world's history, embracing a period when as yet the worship of the true God was not reduced to a system, we are not to look for, in so small a compend, much allusion to the practice of sacred music. But as soon as we come down to the days of the first historian, as soon as we stand by the side of Moses, and look over the church of God, we find them engaged in the practice of this ancient art. No sooner have the host of Israel escaped from the land of bondage, than we behold them pouring forth their joy in a song of sacred praise. And they sing, too, as those who had often sung before. "Then sang Moses and the children of Israel"—the great congregation—" unto the Lord, and spake, saying :

" I will sing unto the Lord,
" For he hath triumphed gloriously."
" The Lord is my strength and my song,
" *And he* has become my salvation."

And Miriam, the prophetess, the sister of Aaron, took a timbrel in her hand; and all the women went out after her with timbrels and with dances." In their flight from Egypt they had not forgotten their instruments of music. "All the women" brought with them the timbrels, with which, in the house of their bondage, they had been wont to enliven the hour of relaxation.

At Baal-peor, as the cooling spring gushed forth from the rock to slake their burning thirst, no sooner had they drank, than Israel sang the song of praise to Him who gave them drink. As the father of the Hebrew commonwealth was about to leave the world, Jehovah called upon him and said, "Now therefore write ye this song for you, and teach it the children of Israel: put it in their mouths, that this song may be a witness for me against the children of Israel." "Moses therefore wrote this song (Deut. 32.) the same day, and taught it the children of Israel."

From the days of Moses to the establishment of the Jewish monarchy, the people of God were in a condition too unsettled to expect from their historians scarcely more than a mere notice of battles fought, of triumphs won, of invasions, insurrections, and revolts. And yet, amidst the clash of arms and the roll of drums, we hear the sublime strains of the poetess and prophetess Deborah, so sublime and sweet, as to leave in our minds the assurance, that the art of sacred music was receiving much of the attention and calling forth much of the talent of the people. And this assurance is confirmed, when we hear the devout Hannah, as she presents herself and her infant Samuel before the Lord in Shiloh, pouring forth the gratitude of a fond mother in strains that would do honor to a More, a Hemans, or a Langdon—an honor to which, with all their cultivation, they never aspired. Surely sacred music was not at a very low ebb, when even Hebrew females could thus sing their own songs, and such too as have been hitherto, and will be to all subsequent ages, read and sung with growing admiration. Such mothers were worthy of the Asaphs, and Hemans, and Jeduthans who so shortly after sung so sweetly.

These glimpses of the musical and poetic talents of that age prepare us to behold, with less wonder, a youthful shepherd, on the plains of Bethlehem, discoursing, with harp and voice, music which even at this day serves as the best model of all that is pure, and sweet and plaintive, and joyous, and grand in the sacred science. It was then the female passion to excel in song. For when the same shepherd-ministrel "was returned from the slaughter of the Philistine, the women came out of all the cities of Israel, singing and dancing, to meet king Saul, with tabrets, with joy, and with instruments of music. And the women answered (responded to) one another as they played, and said,

"Saul hath slain his thousands,—
(Response.) And David his ten thousands."

The children of such mothers could not but be deeply imbued with the love of sacred song. And when David, therefore, on the occasion of the death of Saul and Jonathan, composed that touching dirge known among the people of Israel as "the song of the bow," and bade them teach the children of Judah the affecting lamentation, enough were found as ready to learn as he was to teach. From such children it was an easy matter to select a sacred choir worthy of the minstrel-king. When David ascended the throne of Israel, we hear of many a sacred concert. When he brought the ark of the "Lord from Kirjath-jearim, David and all Israel played before God with all their might, and with singing, and with harps, and with psalteries, and with timbrels, and with cymbals, and with trumpets." A people among whom were found, even at the very commencement of David's reign, such a profusion of instruments and players, must have had the love of music instilled into their souls from their very birth.

As we proceed with the history of David, we find him, three months afterward, making the most splendid preparations for the restoration of the ark to its home in the city of David. On this occasion we discover among the Levites, who ministered at the altar, an amazing amount of the best musical talent. As far as can be gathered, there was even then a noble choir "of singers as well as of the players on instruments." "And David spake to the chief of the Levites to appoint their brethren, the singers, with instruments of music, psalteries, and harps, and cymbals, sounding by lifting up the voice with joy." "So," we are told, "the singers, Heman, Asaph and Ethan, were appointed to sound with symbals of brass." Others were appointed to direct the psalteries, and others the harps, while "Chenaniah, the chief of the Levites, was for song," and "instructed about the song," or taught the people the magnificent ode which David had prepared for the occasion.

That this choir must have been perpetuated from an early day, and did not then first spring into existence, appears from Numb. 10: 8, 10. "And the sons of Aaron, the priests, shall blow with the trumpets; and they shall be to you for an ordinance for ever throughout your generations. In the day of your gladness, and in your solemn days, and in the beginning of your months, ye shall blow with the trumpets over your burnt offerings, and over the sacrifices of your peace-offerings; that they may be to you for a memorial before your God." This was the origin, doubtless, of the choir in the Hebrew ritual.

Such a preparation having been made, we are told that "all Israel brought up the ark of the covenant of the Lord with

shouting, and with sound of the cornet, and with trumpets, and with cymbals, making a noise with psalteries and harps. And as the ark was deposited in the sacred tent, they lifted up their voice, and sang,

"Give thanks unto the Lord. call upon his name,
"Make known his deeds among the people,
"Sing unto him, sing psalms unto him,
"Talk ye of all his wondrous works.
"Sing unto the Lord, all the earth,
"Show forth from day to day his salvation.

"And all the people said, Amen, and praised the Lord."

At the command of the king, the sacred choir was reorganized for permanent service. "And he appointed certain of the Levites to minister before the ark of the Lord, and to record, and to thank and praise the Lord God of Israel," "Asaph and his brethren to minister before the ark continually, as every day's work required," "and with them Heman and Jeduthan, and the rest that were chosen, who were expressed by name, to give thanks to the Lord,

'Because his mercy endureth for ever.'

And with them Heman and Jeduthan, with trumpets and cymbals for those that should make a sound, and with musical instruments of God."

Under such a king it was to be expected, that the science of sacred music would reach a perfection and extent of practice never before attained. Accordingly we are told, that when, at the close of David's reign, the Levites from the age of thirty years and upward were numbered, "four thousand praised the Lord with instruments which David made to praise therewith." Of these four thousand, "the number of them that were instructed in the songs of the Lord, even all that were cunning was two hundred four score and eight." These chief musicians were divided into twenty-four classes of twelve into each class; and in like manner the remainder of the choir was sub-divided. Each class of twelve had a principal leader, who directed the performances of more than one hundred and fifty musicians, and these formed the daily choir of the sacred service. Each class of one hundred and sixty-six, including its leaders, served one week in course. The whole "Academy" was under the direction of three principal leaders, Asaph, Heman, and Jeduthan. All these gave themselves to the study and practice of sacred music. Twice only during the year, save on extraordinary occasions, was each class called out to lead in the devotions of the sanctuary for a week. The interval was occupied in the cultivation of their musical talent. Some are spoken of as teachers, others as scholars. How often they

met together for a "grand union performance" we are not informed. Perhaps on each recurring occasion of three great festivals of the Hebrew church. Of one such performance only is any record preserved.

When Solomon had finished the temple of God in Jerusalem, a day was appointed for its dedication. On this occasion "all the men of Israel assembled themselves unto the king," and the ark was brought from the city of David, and deposited in the Most Holy place. In this service all the priests and Levites were engaged: "for all the priests that were present were sanctified, and did not then wait by course; also the Levites which were the singers, all of them of Asaph, of Heman, of Jeduthan, with their sons and their brethren being arrayed in white linen, having cymbals, and psalteries, and harps, stood at the east end of the altar, and with them an hundred and twenty priests sounding with trumpets." But who can describe the scene which followed the depositing of the ark? What tongue can tell the grandeur of that song—that

"General burst of joy"—

which was poured forth as the Lord came down to dwell among them? Let the sacred penman speak; none other can. "It came even to pass, as the trumpeters and singers were as one, to make one sound to be heard, in praising and thanking the Lord, and when they lifted up their voice with the trumpets, and cymbals, and instruments of music, and praised the Lord, saying,

'For he is good; for his mercy endureth for ever;'

that then the house was filled with a cloud, even the house of the Lord, for the glory of the Lord had filled the house of God." "And when all the children of Israel saw it, they bowed themselves with their faces to the ground upon the pavement, and worshiped, and praised the Lord, saying,

'For he is good; for his mercy endureth for ever;'"

Oh! it was a glorious scene—it was the triumph of sacred music; and well did the occasion merit it. Worthy of the mightiest, loftiest, grandest chorus of the thousands of Israel, was the coronation of Jehovah in his palace of cedar, ivory, and gold, on the hill of Zion.

He cometh to set up his throne.
The skies with loud jubilees ring;
Sing praise to Jehovah alone,
Sing praises—sing praises to the King.
Sing praises—he ruleth above,
Jehovah 's the King of the earth;
Sing praise in a chorus of love,
And shout his adorable worth.

Would that we could now be greeted with such a chorus! But the prayer is vain. Never since has the earth witnessed such a scene. The halcyon days, the golden age of music has passed away: they passed with the rending of the robe of Solomon. The science has ever since had its admirers, its patrons, its professors, and pupils; but never till another David shall sit upon the throne, never, perhaps, until the second coming of the Son of David—the millenial age—will those scenes be re-enacted, and that glory surpassed.

Suffer me, then, to pass by the modern history of the sacred science, to speak briefly of,

III. The Duty of Sacred Music. If music has its origin in the human soul, if it is the only appropriate expression of the deep, overpowering, bursting joy of a grateful heart, and if David acted by inspiration in uttering his sacred songs—"the songs of the Lord"—and in the organization of the choir of the sanctuary,—then are the claims of vocal and instrumental music to a prominent place in the public worship of God fully established. How could God himself more plainly sanction this arrangement, than he did at the dedication of the temple? It was when the very skies were ringing with the shouts and peals of joy from that noble choir, that Jehovah "bowed the heavens and came down," and his glory filled the house. Why were the Psalms written but for song? why recorded but for use? and why in the Bible, but for the public praise of God's people? What mean all those eloquent appeals to all the earth, to "make a joyful noise unto the Lord," with which the Psalms abound? Why saith the inspired bard, "Sing unto the Lord with the harp, with the harp and the voice of a psalm: with trumpets and sound of cornets make a joyful noise before the Lord the King?" Is all this for mere effect? Is it all mere poetic license? And are the Psalms of David then to rank no higher than a volume of the "British Poets?"—to be read, admired, and laid aside? Does not God speak in all these Psalms—in all these thrilling appeals for praise? and speak to every reader of the Bible—to every human creature? In what part of the sacred Scriptures does he speak with more force, more eloquence, in more stirring accents? Either, then, throw away the book of Psalms, or acknowledge the claims of sacred music to the exercise of your own powers of mind and heart.

Let it not be said, that the old dispensation has passed away, and with it the claims of sacred music. The Saviour of men came not to destroy either the law, or its devout, soul stirring, and spiritual rites of worship. On the very eve of his crucifixion he joined with his disciples in a song of praise. His followers kept up the same edifying custom. No sooner is a church gathered in Jerusalem, than we behold them assembling daily, with one accord, in the temple, and from house to house,

"praising God" with gladness. Paul and Silas, in the very dungeons of Philippi, "sang praises unto God." The same Paul commends his own practice to his brethren at Colosse and at Ephesus. "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, admonishing one another in psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord." "Speaking to yourselves in psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord." To the Corinthians he says, "When ye come together, every one of you hath a psalm;" and therefore for himself he says, "I will sing with the spirit, and I will sing with the understanding." In this passage there is a very plain recognition of the practice of all the early christians, to mingle songs of praise with their supplications in the public worship of God. To this practice abundant testimony is given by the church-historians. Allusion is made to it in the exhortation of Paul to the Hebrews; "By him," i. e. Christ, "let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, i. e. the fruit of our lips, give thanks to his name." So also James commends and enjoins the practice. "Is any merry? let him sing psalms."

Why are we not to give as much heed to these instructions and injunctions as to those which speak of prayer? The one is as truly, if not as frequently, enjoined as the other. Who, then, can plead exemption from the obligation to sing the praises of God in the sanctuary? None, who have the requisite faculties. And who, save the deaf mute, has not? Most confidently I answer, NONE. I say not that all can, without instruction, sing with propriety, or that all can learn to sing with the same proficiency and skill; but that all, who are not afflicted with some physical derangement of the organs of voice, have all the faculties requisite for the practice of song, and may, by proper cultivation, just as certainly learn to sing as to read.

It will be admitted, doubtless, that all who can appreciate the distinctions of musical sounds, and have the organs requisite for the production of those sounds, can learn to sing. All the distinctions of musical sound may be reduced to three: force, time and tune. Force refers to the different degrees of loudness with which a sound is made. Every ear can determine whether a word is pronounced, or sung, loud or soft. All, then, can appreciate accent in music. Time refers to the rapidity with which sounds are uttered. Every mind is familiar with the distinctions marked by the epithets, slow and fast. No ear can fail to perceive the difference between the slow measured movement of a pendulum, and the rapid ticking of a watch. Indeed every man, every day, gives evidence, in a thousand instances, of his perception of the different measures of time, and so all have the second qualification in distinguishing sounds. The perception of tones, too, is a common characteristic of

man. There is not a human being who has the faculty of hearing underanged, that cannot distinguish, and instantly too, between the hearty laugh and the plaintive cry. But the laugh is produced principally by the reception, in quick succession, of two sounds, which differ from each other a single tone; while the cry is produced by a similar utterance of two sounds, differing but half a tone. Let any individual attempt to call another with any energy, and at once the voice glides up to an eighth, or to the commencement of another octave; while a common call will produce the change of a sixth. In the frequent occurrence of yawning, the voice descends an octave. In like manner, a cough may be accurately expressed by musical intervals. In common conversation the voice glides through all these intervals. A question can scarcely be asked without the use of that change of tone which musical science calls a fifth, sixth, or eighth. And it is the perception, on the part of him to whom the question is addressed, of this change of tone, that enables him to determine that the sentence calls for an answer. If a speaker could possibly utter, for any length of time, a succession of monotones, there would be no ear in the assembly that would not instantly perceive it, and none that would not be sensible that it was ridiculous. All, therefore, who can thus appreciate or perceive these distinctions of musical sound have an ear for music—an ear that may be cultivated almost indefinitely.

But have all a voice for music? Most certainly, if they can speak at all. There is not a man who, in common conversation, does not glide through the whole gamut; not a man who can confine himself to the same unvaried tone in animated discourse. It is just as natural for him to raise or lower his voice to impede or quicken his speech, and to produce all the usual variations of tone, as it is for him to speak at all. The only difference in these respects between common discourse and singing is, "that in the latter case the individual sounds are given separately and prolonged, without gliding into another, whereas in the former no sound is individually prolonged, but just touched and melts into another." William Gardiner, in his "very able work on the Music of Nature," of which it has been said that "it would be difficult to name a work in the language, combining, in so high a degree, acute observation, philosophical analysis, and apt illustration," while he admits that "some persons have a greater aptness for the vocal art than others," expressly affirms that "there is not a voice, however stubborn, but what may be rendered sufficiently pliant to perform with accuracy the notes of the diatonic scale."

That this is not mere theory has been abundantly established by satisfactory experiment. In some parts of Germany every child is taught to sing as well as to read. And their teachers affirm "that no child is ever found incapable of vocal and instrumental performance." In Prussia every child must be sent

to school, and there must learn to sing. "Even the peasants in some parts of Germany," says Dwight, "pass many a leisure hour with the guitar or piano for their companions." "I once stopped," says another traveller, "at a German settlement of no great size, where I was invited to hear some music at the house of a mechanic. Here a small company performed, vocally and instrumentally, almost the whole of Haydn's 'Creation.' The master of the house, a blacksmith, more than sixty years old, took the first violin. His aged wife, in spectacles, gave us a vocal part. The eldest son, a joiner from a neighboring village, sat down at a Leipsic piano forte, on which, after having tuned it, he then executed with great skill the whole accompaniment. Several young men and women filled the remainder of the score. A boy five years of age was pointed out to me as beginning to play on the violin. On inquiry, I found that there was not a house in the town without a piano forte, or some keyed instrument. It may be stated as a general fact, that every house in Germany and Switzerland has some musical instrument."

The professors in the Boston Academy of Music affirm "that of all the pupils under their care, (amounting in 1834 to 2,200,) they have never yet found the individual absolutely destitute of the power necessary for learning music." One of the principal leaders in the New York Academy of Sacred Music has publicly testified, after having instructed thousands during a period of more than twenty years devoted to musical instruction, that all his observation is to the same effect. "Go," he says, "into the well-regulated infant-school, and among some hundreds of pupils you will find only here and there an individual whose voice is wholly unformed; select the very worst of these for special training, and all without exception are found to improve more or less rapidly." "Having visited many infant-schools in different parts of the country," says a writer in the Christian Spectator, "we have never yet found a child who was unable to sing after he had been in the school a proper length of time."

With these facts in view, I cannot hesitate to ascribe the power of music to the whole human family, with the exception already named. And if the Creator requires of every creature to love and serve him with all their mind and strength, who can question the duty of those to whom God has given this faculty of music to cultivate and use it in the praises of the Almighty? Yes,

"Let every thing that hath breath praise the Lord."

Finally and briefly, let me advert to some of

IV. THE USES OF SACRED MUSIC. Not to speak of its effects upon the health, which are most beneficial, and upon the animal spirits, which are of the happiest kind, I would simply refer to its effect upon the heart. "Pure and simple music,"

says Plato, "is the sister of bodily exercise; as exercise imparts health to the body, so music imparts self-government to the soul." Martin Luther, than whom none, scarcely, have been, in modern days, more efficient patrons of sacred music, says, "The youth must always be accustomed to this art, for it makes men kind and virtuous." Mr. Woodbridge, editor of the "Annals of Education," relates that "the effect of introducing music into one of the villages of German Switzerland, upon the entire moral character of the people, was immediate and striking. They relinquished drinking, riot, and debauchery, and all disreputable amusements, to join in musical recreation. And villages before noted for nothing but ill, became distinguished for sobriety, order and purity."

It has already been remarked that music has ever been regarded as a most appropriate vehicle of praise. The exercise of the art, therefore, is adapted to awaken that feeling of the soul, with which it is so intimately associated in the pious bosom. The association of certain feelings with their peculiar tones is so intimate that we can scarcely hear the latter without having the former stirred up. The plaintive cry awakens pity and compassion. The lover of the dance can seldom hear the strains of the viol without an inclination to move with corresponding step. The veteran soldier hears the bugle-call, or the rolling of the drum, and at once his bosom beats for the tented field. Who has not heard of the wondrous effects of the Tyrolese song, or Marsellaise Hymn? Who has not felt a patriot's blood grow warm while "Hail Columbia" was poured forth from a thousand hearts? So, too, the lovers of sacred song are often stirred to rapture when the lofty and solemn tones of the noble organ, or the full burst of praise from the great congregation, fall upon their ears. Then, if ever, the Christian feels that he can pour out all his soul to God.

But the influence of sacred music in the family circle is no less delightful. Who can help but recognize the lineaments of peace and joy in that scene so graphically drawn by the Scottish bard:

"The cheerfu' supper done, wi' serious face,
They round the ingle form a circle wide;
The sire turns o'er, wi' patriarchal grace,
The big Ha' Bible, ance his father's pride;
Of strains, that once did sweet in Zion glide,
He wales a portion with judicious care;
And 'Let us worship God!' he says with solemn air.

"They chant their artless notes in simple guise,
They tune their hearts, by far the noblest aim;
Perhaps Dundee's wild warbling measures rise,
Or plaintive Martyrs, worthy o' the name."

How is the soul drawn upward by such a picture! How much more when we take our seat by that "ingle," and not only hear the very strains themselves, but mingle our voice with that of the good old sire and his bairns! Soul-stirring scene! Oft may its power be experienced!

We have seen an audience carried, as it were, upon a mighty wave, as some noble anthem has thundered forth the grandeur of our God, or whispered to the soul the melting notes of Calvary. Yea, when that favorite of Martin Luther and of the whole church, good "Old Hundred," has fallen on our ears from the lips of thousands beneath the sacred dome, and we ourselves have mingled in the song, it has seemed, indeed, as if

> "Our souls, on wings sublime,
> Rose from the vanities of time,
> And drew the parting vail to see
> The glories of eternity."

Sacred music, practiced by the Christian, makes him happier, better. When performed in secret, it dispels the gloom of depression, quiets the sea of turbulence, and prepares the soul to come into the presence of its Maker with a livelier, holier joy. In the family circle it checks the wildness of the young, melts away the barriers of passion, and unites the kindred group in heavenly devotion. But it is chiefly in the great congregation that its full power is felt; or would be felt, if our congregations, having taken time and pains to learn this sacred science, would pour forth their swelling tides of harmony in the song of praise. "Methinks," said Baxter, "when we are singing the praises of God in great assemblies, with joyful and fervent spirits, I have the liveliest foretaste of heaven upon earth; and I could almost wish that our voices were loud enough to reach through all the world and to heaven itself."

Thus the practice of sacred music is admirably fitted to prepare the soul for the enjoyments of the world of glory. When John was favored with a glimpse of the upper sanctuary, he found them all engaged in chanting that noble anthem: "Holy! Holy! Holy! Lord God Almighty!"—and this is no sooner ended, than they take up the strain, "Thou art worthy, O Lord!" These chants ended, they take their harps and sing a new song: "Thou art worthy, for Thou wast slain!" "And I beheld," says John, "and I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne, and the priests and the elders; and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands, saying with a loud voice, 'Worthy is the Lamb!' and every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I saying, 'Blessing, and honor, and glory!' After this I beheld, and lo! a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, and cried with a loud voice, 'Salvation to our God!'" whereupon all the angels swell again the mighty chorus, "Blessing, and glory, and wisdom!" And yet again he listens. And now the martyr-host appear. "And they sing the songs of Moses, the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb: 'Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty!" "And after

these things I heard," he says, "a great voice of much people in heaven, saying, 'Alleluia! Salvation, and glory, and honor, and power!' And a voice came out of the throne, saying, 'Praise our God, all ye his servants! and ye that fear him, both small and great!'" After this expressive solo follows another chorus—the "Hallelujah Chorus,"—"the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunderings, saying, 'Alleluia, for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth!'"

Thus, anthem after anthem, and chorus after chorus, peals from the upper temple. There all is praise, and none are silent.

"Seraphs, with elevated strains,
Circle the throne around;
And move and charm the starry plains,
With an immortal sound."

With them we hope to dwell—with them to praise. And how can we consent to forego even here the bliss of heaven? Why does not every blood-bought soul catch something of that inspiring theme, that fills all heaven with joy? why not now learn and exercise that holy art, which fills angelic hosts and ransomed saints with rapture? Has he the soul of a saint, who has no sympathy with the saints in bliss, no desire to anticipate their joy? I wonder not that the devotees of Mammon and of Mars, of Thespis, and of Bacchus, are deaf to the praises, and dead to the allurements of sacred song. Yes,

"Let those refuse to sing,
Who never knew our God;
But favorites of the heav'nly King
Should speak their joys abroad."

Wake up, then, ye ransomed ones! awake to bliss. Behold what a fountain of joy is yet sealed up within your bosom. Break those seals, and let the living streams gush forth. Repress no more the rapturous emotions of a glad spirit. Kindred of the skies! drink in their rapture who dwell by the river of the water of life. Ye who minister at the altar! take of the living flame that is there kindled by the breath of God, and kindle up in the heart of every worshipper the fire of holy love, the flame of sacred, rapturous praise. And ye, to whom God has given the high trust of training the souls of your own offspring for the skies; ye Christian parents! bring those little ones, while yet they scarcely lisp, and teach their infant lips to sing "Hosanna!" Let the incense of praise ascend to God from the altar of every sanctuary, household and heart.

"In one mighty choir,
All creatures! unite,
His praise to respire,
By day and by night;
Ye heirs of salvation!
His praises record;
O'er all the creation,
Oh! praise ye the Lord!

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GOD A GREAT KING.

"*I am a* GREAT KING, *saith the Lord of hosts.*"—Malachi i: 14.

In these words God asserts his kingly authority. He claims to be the great Monarch of the universe.

The sovereignty which God here asserts is not that over the natural world, but over the moral world. Nor is it so properly that which consists in the *disposing of events* in the moral world, as that which consists in his administering over it a *moral* government—a government of *law*. There is a distinction to be observed here. God exercises his sovereignty in *disposing of events* in the moral world, in such way as to fulfil his eternal purposes. He turns the hearts of men as he pleases, even as the rivers of waters are turned. But this species of sovereignty is not so properly denoted by the term *King*. This term, which God applies to himself in the text, rather leads us to contemplate him as *administering a government* like other kings—a government of *law* over free, intellingent subjects. God has seen fit to create innumerable beings, of different orders, and to endow them with intellectual and moral powers. He has made them after his own image; capable, like himself, of knowing and doing their duty; fit subjects of *law* and *government*. And he has undertaken to administer such a government over them. He has undertaken to be their *King*, and to exercise over them a kingly power. He has given them laws for the regulation of their conduct. He has promised rewards to the obedient, and threatened punishment to the disobedient. He has erected a high and holy throne, and sits upon it. He has taken the sceptre in his hand, and claims to administer a government of law over all the intelligent creatures which he has made.

In administering such a government, it is obviously necessary that the great Monarch of the universe, like every other monarch, should be particularly *guarded* on certain *essential points*. In the first place, he must maintain his own *honor* and *glory* as a Sovereign. He must do this, by seeing to it that his laws, and penalties, and promises, and dispensations are all perfectly *right*. They must be, and must be seen to be, *holy, just*, and *good*. The least defect here would be an everlasting dishonor to him, and would detract just so much from the regard which was due to him as a sovereign. Were it seen that his law was too strict or too lax; that it required or threatened too much, or too little; that he was partial in his rewards, or cruel in his punishments; in short, that any part of his administration was otherwise than holy, just, and good; his glory as a Sovereign would be tarnished, and the stability of his throne would be seriously threatened.

Secondly; it is moreover incumbent on the Supreme Being to maintain his *dignity* as a Sovereign. He can no more degrade himself, than he can deny himself. He can no more do that which is inconsistent with his dignity, than that which is inconsistent with his holiness or truth. He cannot even gratify his *benevolence* at the expense of his dignity. He cannot consistently do that which might be prompted by mere benevolence or pity, if, in order to this, he must descend beneath what was proper for him as the Sovereign of the universe, and degrade himself in the eyes of his subjects.

I remark, thirdly, if God is to administer a government of law, he must maintain his *authority* as a Sovereign, and the honor and authority of his *law*. He must cause himself to be revered, and his holy law to be respected. Obviously a government of law, whether on a large or small scale, can be maintained in no other way. Let any Sovereign begin to trifle with his law—to exact beyond it, or to fall beneath it—to withhold its rewards when merited, or to remit its penalty on slight and insufficient grounds, and suffer the transgressor lightly to escape; and he cannot long continue his government. It cannot be long before himself and his law will be trampled on at pleasure, and his government will be subverted and overthrown.

In reference to the points to which I have here adverted, it is important that every Sovereign, great or small, should be strictly guarded. Not even the head of a family, or the teacher of a common school, can maintain his authority without being guarded here. But several reasons may be assigned why this is of very *special* importance to the great Monarch of the universe.

1. His government is of *vast extent*. Did it reach to only a few subjects, he might be less cautious as to his measures. Were it limited, like the monarchies of earth, within comparatively narrow bounds, he might be less strict and vigilant in his adminstration. But the government of God is, I had almost said, (and perhaps I might truly say,) *boundless*. It stretches from world to world—beyond all known or assignable limits. It includes myriads upon myriads of intellectual, immortal beings, all subject to the same

law, all held by the same indispensable obligations, and all accountable to the same absolute and almighty Sovereign And now if this Sovereign is to sit upon his throne, and maintain it, and wield his sceptre over all these countless myriads of intelligent minds in heaven, on earth, and throughout the universe; who does not see that he must maintain the *honors* of his throne—must maintain inviolate his sovereign *dignity* and *authority?*

There are many things which God may do, and not endanger the stability of his government. He may roll aside the visible heavens as a flaming parchment. He may dash material worlds out of existence at a word, and re-create them at another word. But he cannot trifle with his law. He cannot trifle with his dignity and authority as a Sovereign. These must be guarded and secured *at any rate*, or a government so vast as that which he has undertaken to administer cannot possibly be maintained.

2. Another reason why it is of indispensable importance that the great Monarch of the universe should guard well the points to which I have adverted, grows out of the *character* of his subjects, or at least of a portion of them. Had God created no intelligent beings but those of the feeblest capacity—who were but a single remove from the brutes—who could look but a little way, and know but little either of themselves or their Creator; it would be of less consequence in what manner his government over them was administered. Defects might occur, and yet never be perceived; or, if perceived, might be glossed over to their satisfaction. But God has been pleased to create different orders of intelligences; and some of them, we know, of the brightest, noblest capacities and powers. He has been pleased to surround himself, more especially in his upper temple, with angels and archangels, cherubim and seraphim, spirits of towering height and glowing intelligence, who are capable of looking into every part of his administration—of scanning and scrutinizing his works and ways. And not only so, a portion of the lofty spirits whom God has created sustain to him the attitude of *enemies*. They have cast off his authority, broken his laws, and raised the standard of rebellion against him. Still, their existence has not terminated, nor is the keen eye of their intelligence dimmed. They still live in the presence of God, and watch the course of his administration, and watch it with the *intent* to find occasion of objection and murmuring, if they can. Now it is over all these bright and glowing intelligences—friends and enemies—those that love him and those that hate him—in heaven, on earth, in hell, and throughout the universe—it is in *their* presence, and under *their* eye, that the great God has set up his throne, and is carrying on his government. He shrinks not from their closest scrutiny. He throws himself all open, so far as possible, to their survey. He calls upon them to look him in the face—to look through the whole course of his administration, and to testify against him, if they can. Now, is it not perfectly obvious, in view of all these circumstances, that the great Sovereign himself must be specially guarded as to what he does, or suffers to be done, under

his government? Must he not see to it, that nothing takes place to tarnish the honors of his throne—nothing that will not bear the strictest scrutiny? Must he not guard his law with a sleepless vigilance, and maintain it unbroken, and to the last iota, throughout the universe.'

3. It still farther appears that it is of indispensable importance for God to guard well the points to which we have referred, since, from his very nature, he cannot descend to the *shifts* which other sovereigns sometimes make in order to evade these points; or in case of a failure, he cannot resort to such *excuses* as other sovereigns may with propriety offer. For instance, should a case of transgression go unpunished under the government of a father, a school-master, or a petty earthly monarch, he might save his authority by pleading that he did not see the evil committed. It did not fall under his eye. It took place behind his back, or when his attention was turned another way. But the great Monarch above can never justify himself by such an excuse as this. For he is omniscient. He sees and knows every thing. No circumstances of seclusion can be conceived of, through which his eye does not intuitively penetrate. There is no darkness where the workers of iniquity can hide themselves from him. If the law is transgressed in any part of his immense dominions, he must instantly see it; and if the transgressor escapes a merited punishment, he must be privy to it, and responsible for it, to the universe of intelligent minds.

Persons in authority sometimes do not *wish* to see instances of neglect or transgression which take place among those who are subject to their control. If they see them, they will feel constrained to notice them publicly, and to inflict punishment. And to avoid this necessity they choose not to see them. But the omniscient God cannot descend to any such shift as this. He *must* see every instance of neglect or transgression which takes place under his government; and seeing it, he must dispose of it publicly, according to the principles of eternal justice, and in a manner to satisfy the universe of intelligent minds.

If transgression fails to meet with its reward under human governments, the sovereign sometimes justifies himself by pleading his *inability*. The offence was of such a nature, or it took place under such circumstances, that he was not *able* to punish it as it deserved. But it is obvious, if God suffers the offender against him to escape punishment, he can never justify himself in this way. He can never plead his *inability* to inflict it, because he is every where present, and every where *omnipotent*. Wherever and whenever an offence takes place, he is on the spot to see it, and is in the present possession of the almighty power to punish it. However formidable the transgression may be, or however numerous and mighty the confederacy engaged in it, they are all before him as the moth, and he can crush them with the utmost ease.

When defects are discovered in the administration of other monarchs, they may plead, in excuse, that they do not *pretend to be perfect*. They do not profess to administer a perfect government,

and this is not to be expected of them. But the great Monarch of the universe can never resort to *this* excuse. He *does* pretend to administer a perfect government; and he challenges the combined wisdom of the universe to invalidate his pretensions in a single instance. He has spread out before his subjects his entire *law*, for their inspection and scrutiny, as well as for their observance. The rewards of obedience, and the penalties of disobedience, are alike exposed to their view. The trial which he affords to his creatures, his mode of treating them while on trial, the judgment which he passes on them, and the retribution he assigns them, are all naked and open to myriads upon myriads of deeply interested and watchful eyes; and he calls upon them all to judge for themselves, and charge the *least defect* upon him—the *least* deviation from absolute perfection if they can. He has even appointed a *day* for this very purpose—the day of "the revelation of the righteous judgment of God"—in which he will unfold to the assembled worlds the whole course of his previous administration, and give them an opportunity to see for themselves, whether or not he has verified his claim to perfection, and done, in every instance, right. And now I ask, administering his government under these *peculiar* circumstances, and with all these considerations pressing upon him, is it not incumbent on the Divine Being to *guard well the honors of the throne?* Must he not see to it, that nothing is done, or suffered to be done throughout his dominions, to tarnish in the least degree his glory, or detract from his dignity as a Sovereign? Must he not maintain, at all events, his sovereign authority, and the authority of his law, and cause it to be respected throughout the universe.

Perhaps some may think that this watchful care for the law is of no importance to God, since, being in the possession of omnipotence, he can, under all circumstances, do as he pleases. But it must be borne in mind, that the subject before us is one with which direct omnipotence has no concern. It is as much incumbent on a mighty monarch as a weak one, and on one possessing *almighty* power as on any other, in administering a government of *law*, to maintain the *honor* and *authority* of law. It is as possible for a mighty monarch as for a weak one to disgrace himself in the eyes of his subjects—to forfeit their confidence—to become the object of their deserved contempt; and when he has done this, he can no more govern them by the operation of *law*, than though he were destitute of power. He may, indeed, still farther disgrace himself by crushing them down, and grinding them to the dust; but in this case his government becomes one of *force* and not of *law*—the administration of a tyrant, and not that of a holy and righteous Sovereign.

Were it possible for God to *resign* his government—were he to abdicate his throne, and yield up his sceptre; he might be released from those *obligations* of government which are now upon him. But so long as he undertakes to sit upon a throne, and wield a sceptre, and administer such a government as his—so vast in extent—so closely scrutinized—and (as he claims) so absolutely

perfect; it is obvious there are many things which he can with no propriety do. He cannot degrade himself. He cannot deny himself. He cannot do anything which is inconsistent with his honor, or with the honor or authority of his law; any thing to impair the confidence or diminish the obligations of his subjects; any thing which shall give them the least occasion to charge him with weakness, or injustice, or with the slightest deviation in any instance from the eternal principles of holiness and truth.

The above discussion gives rise to several *interesting reflections.* And,

1. We see the importance of the official work of *the Father* in the great scheme of man's redemption It is obvious to every one who looks into the subject of redemption at all, that the offices of the Son and Spirit are of indispensable importance in this great work. The Son must become incarnate, suffer, and die, to make expiation for sin. He must rise from the dead, and ascend into heaven, to make intercession for his people. The Spirit, too, must descend, and carry on and complete *his* appropriate work. He must enlighten dark minds, and break hard hearts, and form and prepare lost souls for heaven. Every one, I repeat, who attends to the subject of redemption at all, must see, at once, that the offices of the Son and Spirit are indispensable. But many have been led to doubt and inquire respecting the official work of the Father. What does it devolve on *him* to do in this stupendous scheme of redemption? And how much importance is to be attached to *his* appropriate office and work? To these questions the foregoing discussion furnishes an answer, and presents it before us in a strong light. While the works of atonement and sanctification are going forward, through the official agency of the Son and Spirit, it is the province of the Father to sit upon the throne and *guard the honors of the law.* While the Son is divesting himself of his heavenly glory, and making his entrance into our flesh and world—while he is lying in the manger, enduring reproach and persecution, agonizing in the garden, and bleeding on the cross; and while the Holy Spirit is striving, and being resisted—knocking at the sinner's heart, and being repulsed—is renewing and recovering lost souls, and preparing them for heaven; while these things are going on, it is, as I said, the peculiar province of the Father to see to it that no dishonor is put upon the law; that not one iota is detracted from its binding authority; that nothing is done to degrade or weaken the Divine government, and so render it contemptible in the eyes of intelligent beings. It is to the Father on his throne, and in his *official capacity*, that the sacrifice of the Son is offered, and his intercessions are presented. It is the Father who accepts the sacrifice, hears the intercession, sends down the promised Spirit, and who, when the sinner is renewed, forgives and saves him with an everlasting salvation, and all this in perfect consistency with the honor and glory of the Divine government; so that when the pardoned sinner is received into heaven, and made a partaker of its eternal joys, it shall be seen by all those glowing

intelligences that God is glorious and just, and that the stability of his throne is rather secured than impaired by the exercise of redeeming mercy.

2. We see, in view of the foregoing remarks, why, in all parts of the Bible, and throughout the entire scheme of Gospel mercy so much honor is put upon *the Divine law*. No one can look into the Bible, the Old Testament or the New, without being impressed with this important fact. When the law was to be delivered to the Israelitish church, God came down upon the flaming mount, attended by adoring angels and surrounded with every possible token of magnificence. And when the law had been delivered, we find it deposited alone in the inmost recesses of the tabernacle and temple, in the *most holy place*, where it was approached by no foot except that of the high priest, and by him only once in a year. It was on the mercy-seat, which covered the tables of the law, that the blood of atonement was annually sprinkled. Before it the holy incense was offered. Upon it stood the cherubim with extended wings. Above it dwelt the dazzling Shekinah, the mysterious token of the Divine presence and glory.

And this high honor which was put upon the law under the former dispensation, was continued and extended under the new. "Think not," says Christ, "that I am come to *destroy the law* or the prophets. I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil. For verily I say unto you, till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one title shall in no wise pass from *the law*, till all be fulfilled." Our blessed Saviour here does as much as to say, that *the heavens* and *the earth*, by which phraseology was then understood the *material universe*, with all its array of suns, and stars, and systems, and worlds—that *the whole* might better be swept away, and be dashed in ruins, than that one jot or one tittle should pass unfulfilled from the holy law of God. But I need not quote passages in proof of this point. The *entire scheme of gospel mercy* is so planned and arranged in every part, as to put the highest honor upon the *Divine law*. For what, I ask, did the Saviour die, but to honor the broken law? And what is that *repentance* enjoined in the Gospel, but repentance for having transgressed the law? And what is the *forgiveness* promised in the Gospel but a remission of the incurred penalty of God's holy law? And what is that *salvation* which believers are encouraged to expect on the ground of the Gospel, but a deliverance from the curse of the law, and a renewed heart to obey its precepts? In short, all the means, motives, and influences of the Gospel are aimed directly at this one point, to bring back the sinner from his wanderings, and hold him, henceforward, in his allegiance to the law. This characteristic feature of the Gospel is too manifest to be mistaken by any observer; and the *reason* of it is obvious, in view of the preceding discourse. God has undertaken to administer a *government of law* over the universe of intelligent creatures; and in order to do this, he *must maintain* inviolate its authority and its honors. Especially is this incumbent on him under a dispensation of *mercy*, in which he proposes to remit the penalty

of the broken law to myriads upon myriads of transgressors, and receive them back to his bosom and his love. In carrying out such a plan of mercy, special care must be taken, and special provision made (such as we have seen *are* made in the Gospel) to secure the honors of the law, else the effect of the plan will be to tarnish its honors, and weaken its authority, and impair, if not subvert, the government of Jehovah. Obviously no scheme of mercy could ever be tolerated under the Divine government, which was not so planned and arranged, in every part, as to put the highest honor upon the law of God.

3. It is further evident from what has been said, that in order to understand the dispensations of Jehovah, we must steadily contemplate him as a *Sovereign*—"a *great King*." We must keep constantly in mind his *duties*, his *claims*, his *obligations* as a Sovereign. If he were not a Sovereign, and were released from his obligations as a Sovereign, he might do many things which he cannot with any safety or propriety do now.

It is sometimes insisted, for example, that *the law of God* is not adapted to man in his fallen condition. It is too strict. It cannot be obeyed. And why is it not, in some degree, abated? Why does not God consent, in accommodation to the weakness and perverseness of man, to relax something of the strictness of his law? In answer to inquiries such as these, I have only to say, that God is "a *great King*." He has a great kingdom to govern, and to govern by the force of law. And to abate one iota of his law would be to dishonor and impair it. His law is perfectly good now. It requires not at all too much or too little. And for him to alter or relax it, in accommodation to the weakness or wickedness of man, would be to dishonor it and disgrace himself. It would be inconsistent, not only with his obligations as a Sovereign, but with holiness, goodness, and truth.

It is sometimes asked why God cannot abate something of the *penalty* of his law. Why must he needs threaten transgression so severely? Or if he threatens, why must he needs inflict to the full amount of the threatening? Why does he not abate *something*—at least in its application to poor fallen man—of that dreadful penalty which he has affixed to his law? To these enquiries *I* answer as before: God is a *Sovereign*. He has undertaken to administer a government of law over friends and foes—a government which stretches to the farthest bounds of the created universe. And the penalty of his law is *no more* than sufficient to sustain its authority and manifest adequately his holy hatred of sin. Indeed, in numberless instances which have occurred already, this penalty has been found *insufficient* to deter from sin. For God to abate any thing of it, therefore, would be only to *weaken* the binding force and authority of law. It would be to detract from the *motives* to future obedience, and thus encourage greater trangression. In short, such a procedure, on the part of God, would be not only unjust to himself as a Sovereign, but unsafe to all the interests of the universe.

It is often demanded, and, as many think, with great plausibility, why may not God consistently pardon sin without an atonement? Why may he not *remit* the penalty of his law to the transgressor, at least, to the *penitent* transgressor, without first resorting to the strange expedient of offering up his own Son as a bloody sacrifice upon the cross. To all this I reply again; *God has undertaken to be a Sovereign.* He has undertaken to administer a vast moral government—a government of *law*—over the universe of intelligent minds. In order to this, it is indispensable, as we have seen, that the *honor* and *authority* of law should be *sacredly guarded.* If this point can be secured, God can consistently pardon sin; but *not otherwise.* And it was simply to secure this point, to magnify the law and make it honorable, that the great atonement was demanded and made. For God to pardon sin without an atonement, would manifestly be to dishonor law. It would be to weaken and subvert law. And it was simply to meet this difficulty, to sustain that law which sinners had broken, and thus render it safe and just for the great Monarch of the universe to pardon and save them, that the Son of God came down and died.

It is sometimes asked why God cannot *release* those, or at least a portion of them, who are suffering his displeasure in the other world. Why should he close up against them every door of hope, and make them the monuments of his *eternal* wrath? Why not suffer them, or at least a *part* of them, at some period in the long progress of eternity, to escape? To bring this matter to the test, let us suppose that at some period in the progress of their eternal existence, a part of the prisoners in hell, or (if the objector pleases) only *one* of them, Judas Iscariot, for example, does escape. He leaves his prison, and comes out, and roams at large among the creatures of God, or ascends up to the mansions of light. A new *fact* has now occurred under the government of God; and all eyes are instantly turned towards it, and all are anxiously inquiring together into the reason of it. "*What does this mean?*" By ten thousand angels and ten thousand devils the inquiry is at once started, "*What does this mean?* Judas certainly was a sinner—a great sinner. He certainly died in impenitence, without an interest in the Saviour. He was accordingly doomed to suffer the terrible penalty of the law and to be miserable for ever. But he has escaped. He is at large. And how is all this to be accounted for? He surely did not escape because God had not the power to retain him, for God is omnipotent. Nor did he escape because God was not present to see and observe him, for God is every where present, and sees all things. God must then have been privy to his escape. He must have aided and abetted in it. And *what does this mean?* What *can* it mean, but that God has at length discovered that his law is too strict, that its threatenings are too severe, and that sin is not so great an evil as he once pretended?"

In view of the fact here supposed, I see not to what other conclusion than this the intelligent universe could come. And having come to such a conclusion respecting God and his law, would it

be possible for God, henceforward, to retain the affections and confidence of his creatures anywhere? "If Judas has been released and taken into heaven, others may be permitted to follow him. Even Satan himself may hope, in due time, to ascend up where he was before; and that, too, not because he shall have repented and submitted, but because it has been discovered that his punishment is not just. And if Satan is released and taken to heaven on such grounds, who knows but that Gabriel may be cast out of heaven and sent down to hell? If God has been unjust in one instance, who knows but he may be in another? In short, who knows any longer what to depend on, or what to expect, under the government of God?"

Manifestly, all confidence in the great Sovereign of the universe, in the rectitude of his law, and the stability of his government, would now be lost. And this being lost, the government of God must henceforth be one of mere *force*, or must be *annihilated*. Revolt would follow revolt, and rebellion succeed rebellion, till anarchy and revolution should prevail every where and become universal

I conclude this general topic with repeating what was said when I entered upon it. In order to understand the dispensations of God, and the reasons of them, we must steadily contemplate him as a *Sovereign*. We must keep in mind his *claims*, his *obligations* as a Sovereign. Governing, as he does, unnumbered worlds, and that, too, by mere force of law, he *must* guard well the honors of his law. He *must* be strict to maintain its authority. He must not suffer one iota to be detracted from it. If in any instances he may seem severe, it is because, as a Sovereign, he must be so. He delights in the exercise of benevolence and mercy; but he cannot exercise either of these attributes at the expense of justice, or in a way to endanger the great interests of the universe. Indeed, it *is* benevolence on a wider scale which prompts the Divine Being to protect his law, and to take all the measures requisite in order to its protection. It *is* benevolence which prompts him to declare, "till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled."

In concluding this discourse, I will only say further, that, as the subjects of God's holy government, it is incumbent on us all to *study* this government, that we may understand it. It is moreover incumbent on us to *bow* to it, and *rejoice* in it. We have nothing to fear from the justice of God or the strictness of his law, so long as we love and obey him. And though we have dreadfully sinned against him, still we have nothing to fear, if we will now repent and turn to God, and bring forth fruits meet for repentence. It is only the *obstinate, persisting rebel*, who will not repent and sue for pardon, that God's law smites and his government crushes; and every such rebel a holy government ought to crush.

Persons of this character have, indeed, every thing to fear from the operation of that government which has been described. For their holy Sovereign, they may be sure, will never yield to them.

His law will not be modified, or its strictness abated, or its penalty relaxed, to favor them. Persisting as they are, they rush directly on the thick bosses of his buckler. They rush upon the point of that flaming sword which is lifted up to destroy them. Persisting as they are, they will soon be in that world of fire which has been kindled to consume them, and from which there is no escape or deliverer. We have seen already that the material universe might sooner pass away and be no more, than that one impenitent, unpardoned soul should be released from its prison, and escape its destiny, in the other world.

Let us then hear, and fear, and do no more wickedly. Let us stand in awe, and sin not. And for all that we have sinned, let us repent, and mourn, and humbly seek forgiving mercy. We are now indulged with precious privileges, the effect of all which will be, if they are not worse than lost upon us, to bring us back from our wanderings, and confirm our allegiance to God and his law. May such be their happy effect upon us *all;* and may we all be prepared to sing, now and for ever,—what we are assured they sing in heaven,—"Allelulia, for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth."

SERMON CCLXXXIV.

BY NOAH PORTER, D.D.
FARMINGTON, CONN.

GOD THE STRENGTH OF HIS PEOPLE.

"*He giveth power to the faint, and to them that have no might he increaseth strength.*"—Isaiah, xl: 29.

This was said with primary reference to the captive church in Babylon; cut off from human aid, and abandoned to the will of her enemies, she was inclined to despondency; as though God himself had forgotten his promises, or were unable to fulfil them. It was in prospect of this that Isaiah was inspired to deliver and record for her admonition and encouragement a considerable part of his interseting prophecy; and, among the most interesting parts of it, the passage which includes the text. "Why sayest thou, O Jacob, and speakest, O Israel, my way is hid from the Lord, and my judgment is passed over from my God? Hast thou not known, hast thou not heard, that the everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary? There is no searching of his un-

derstanding. He giveth power to the faint, and to them that have no might he increaseth strength. Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall. But they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint." These animating assurances and appeals are no less applicable to us, (and to the people of God in all ages,) than they were to the Jewish captives. Our strength both for the purposes of our individual existence in the present world, and for the cause to which the true Iseral from age to age are devoted, is not in ourselves, but in God alone; and as this is obviously true with reference to whatever natural strength of body and of mind is necessary for these purposes, so also it is true especially, and, as I apprehend, according to the spirit and design of the text, with reference to the moral strength, the power of faith, the energy of purpose, the strength of holy fortitude, and patience, and disinterestedness, and zeal which they demand. It is with particular reference to this that it is said, "They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they snall run and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint."

It may then be useful for us to dwell upon this truth, a truth cheering to the humble, and one of which we all need to be often reminded—*that God is the strength of his people.* In illustration of the text, I would refer you,

I. To THE CONDITION OF THE PEOPLE OF GOD AS BEING WITHOUT STRENGTH.

II. To THE FACT THAT GOD STRENGTHENS THEM.

III. TO THE METHOD OF HIS WISDOM IN DOING THIS.

I. *I would refer you to their condition as without strength.* I do not speak of their natural capacity. Man was created in God's own image; and though fallen, he retains the faculties of his high orignal. As an intellgent and moral being, he is possessed of godlike powers; but as to their proper result, he is feeble,—in the language of an apostle, he is "weak through the flesh," by depravity he is without strength, he has no might, and what man is, as fallen, such are the people of God, except as grace makes them to differ. Their moral strength, in respect to its source, is not in themselves but in God alone. In themselves they are without strength, whether considered in relation to their duties, their trials, or the cause to which they are devoted.

They are without strength in relation to the duties incumbent on them. So Paul found himself to be. Hear his lamentation over himself. "To will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not.—For I delight in the law of God after the inward man. But I find another law in my members warring against the law in my mind, and bringing me into captivity

to the law of sin which is in my members. O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death!" Such every person finds himself to be who understands in the same manner the nature of the divine law, and endeavors with the same zeal and perseverance to obey it. That law demands not external morality alone, but internal holiness, the exclusion of all selfishness, pride, covetousness, envy—demands absolute purity of love, reverence, humility, submission, gratitude, and good will. Obedience to it on the part of fallen men involves a complete revolution in their governing intentions, affections, and motions, "a new heart and new spirit." To begin this, to break away from the dominion of sensible and worldly objects, and come under the influence of things invisible and spiritual; to renounce all selfish and worldly ends, and seek as his main end the glory of God in doing good; to be no more conformed to this world, but tranformed in the renewing of the mind,—whoever has seriously made the attempt, has found to be, not of himself, but of the grace of God alone; and, having begun, to persevere he finds to require the continued influence of the same grace. The grace which he may have had yesterday avails not for to day; the good impressions, the pleasant frames, the pure and pious intentions which he then enjoyed could not perpetuate themselves. On the contrary, he is surrounded with influences which tend continually to draw off his mind from the objects of faith, to damp the ardor of his spiritual affections, to corrupt the purity of his governing intentions, to shake the constancy of his obedient purposes, and thus to bring him down from the moral elevation to which faith had raised him, to a level with the men of the world. Hence the conflict in which all the language of the Bible supposes christians to be engaged; hence their need of continual watchfulness and effort; and hence the prayerfulness, which, having done all, they find it indispensable to maintain, casting themselves helpless on God; and with all humility and gratitude uniting in the acknowledgment, "Lord thou hast wrought all our works in us."

They are without strength, also, in relation to the trials incident to their lot. There are afflictions under which nature, unsupported, droops and dies. Thousands have met them in the midst of their joyousness and hope, and from that moment have been inconsolable. So absorbing have been their griefs, as to pall their sensibility to remaining good, drink up their spirits, and sink them by swift degrees into the grave. From such afflictions the people of God have no exemption; and under them they too have been found weak as other men. Not only philosophy and friendship, but their former faith and piety, have been insufficient to sustain them. See Job cursing the day of his birth. There was none in all the earth his equal—a perfect man and upright—and for a season he sees his earthly hopes swept away with an even mind—he bears his personal sufferings also with serenity; under loads of sorrow and disappointment, he is still resigned, and thankful, and joyful in God; but at length the spirit fails—hope

is lost—he yields himself to the mighty pressure; he says, "that he would hide me in the grave. Cursed be the day where I was born." See Jacob when Joseph's blood-stained coat presented to him, rending his clothes and refusing to be comforted saying, "I will go down into the grave, unto my son, mourning." See David, when Absalom's death was announced to him going up to his chamber, and as he goes lamenting, "O my son Absalom, would to God I had died for thee, O Absalom, my son my son?" How extravagant! how unmeaning! And what are we, that we should pretend to be better able than were these servants of God to sustain the evils of life?

If under heavy affliction we are apt to despond, we are apt also to repine. It is on this account that they are called trials. They are like the furnace to the gold. They put our faith and submission to the proof. They make obedience difficult. It is, in truth, on account of the difficulty of sustaining, in the trial of afflictions, an active trust in God, and a cheerful acquiescence in his allotments, that we are so apt to sink under them; aquiescence and trust being, in their nature, peace. Nor are afflictions our only trials. There are smiles of prosperity as well as shocks of adversity; there are allurements as well as buffetings of the world; there is an even course of personal gratification as well as a succession of painful disappointments, which make it difficult for us to mantain that humble trust in God, that spirituality of mind, that constancy in prayer and obedience, which belong so essentially to the life of godliness. Temptations of some sort are inseparable from our present state; and what occasion we have to pray that if we must needs be subject to them, they may be only those which are common to men, or that we may have strength proportionable to bear them! How weak the best of men have been found in themselves when exposed to them, the sacred page affords us solemn and repeated admonitions. There is Abraham, the father of the faithful, turning aside into crooked ways lest strangers kill him for the sake of his beautiful wife. There is Moses the meekest of men, indulging himself in passion and in pride at the waters of strife. There is David, the man after God's own heart, going up to his neighbour's bed and then shedding that neighbour's blood to cover the atrocious crime. And there is Peter, one hour protesting to his Master, "Though all men should deny thee, yet will not I," and then next denying with oaths and imprecations that he knew not the man. The experience of all the world has shown that the best of men, if left to themselves, may commit the greatest of sins; that there is no man who, if not prevented by divine grace, may not commit any iniquity; that the firmest resolution against it, when measured with the strength of appropriate temptation, is utter weakness, and that therefore it becomes every one who, for a course of years, has held on his way of steadfast obedience, to say, "It is not I, but the grace of God that has been with me."

If in relation to their duties and their trials, the people of God

are without strength, much more are they so in relation to the advancement of the cause of religion in the world. If they are insufficient to work out their own salvation, how should they be sufficient to save others—to convince them of sin, and convert them to God; to transmit to a succeeding generation the knowledge of the truth and the ordinances of grace; to cause the Gospel to triumph over the error, irreligion, and licentiousness that oppose it, and deliver the captives from the power of the mighty? All this is to be done, to be done by them; and how, Christ has told us; "Lo, I am with you alway, even to the end of the world." "The Comforter, even the Spirit of truth,—whom the world cannot receive, he abideth with you, and shall be in you" "He shall testify of me, and ye also shall bear witness." "And he, when he is come, shall reprove the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment." The apostles also explained it, when, speaking of their success as "ministers of the New Testament," they said, "Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves, but our sufficiency is of God." Again, "We have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God and not of us." The people of God, then, are without strength, and I would now more directly refer you,

II. *To the fact that God strengthens them.*

By this I mean that he gives them not only the ordinary supports of his Providence, but also the special influences of his grace; not only that he preserves them in being, sustains their intellectual and moral faculties, and affords them the moral restraints and influences which are common to men, but that he vouchsafes to them the grace which is effectual to their performance in different degrees of the duties incumbent on them—their perseverance with joyfulness, amidst the trials which befal them, and their successful prosecution of the cause of truth and holiness in the world. They are "strengthened by his Spirit in the inner man;" "strengthened with all might according to his glorious power, unto all patience and long-suffering, with joyfulness," not merely capable, as other men are, of doing the will and subserving the cause of the Redeemer, but endowed by his Spirit with the moral energy,—the strength of faith, and love, and fortitude, and zeal necessary for this purpose. That God does, in this manner, strengthen his people, appears from his promises and their experience.

It appears from his promises: "Fear thou not, for I am with thee; be not dismayed, for I am thy God; I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness." "My grace is sufficient for thee, for my strength is made perfect in weakness." "God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will, with the temptation, also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it." "As thy days, so shall thy strength be." "The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord; though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down; for the Lord upholdeth

him with his hand." To whom do these precious promises belong? They are the common inheritance of those who, by the faith of the Gospel, are reconciled to God. "That by two immutable things, by which it is impossible for God to lie, they may have a strong consolation who have fled for refuge, to lay hold on the hope set before us; which hope we have as an anchor to the soul, both sure and steadfast."

In accordance with these promises is the testimony of experience. Witness the experience of Abraham, of Moses, of David, of the apostles, by whom, though weak as other men, such wonders of grace were done both in their acts of faith and the success of their efforts in the work of redemption. Witness the whole list of worthies of whom the apostle makes mention to the Hebrews, who, "out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens;" and, what is far more glorious, "wrought righteousness, obtained promises, and were tortured, not accepting of deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection." Witness the multitude of the people of God, in all ages; for which one of them all in the endless variety of duties, services, and trials allotted them, and notwithstanding their conscious weakness, and temporary defeats and backslidings, has not upon the whole been sustained in the faith and patience of the saints, and been carried triumphantly through? Witness also the preservation and progress of the church of God by their means from age to age. Fires of persecution and floods of temptation, the power of states and the subtlety of Satan and his hosts have been employed to destroy her, and still she sits and sings, "God is our refuge and strength, therefore will we not fear. The Lord of Hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge." The Lord will give strength to his people.

III. *The method of his wisdom in doing this.*

It is by engaging their confidence in him for this purpose. His effectual aid is free and sure to all those who will depend on it according to his word. He deems himself bound in honor to meet the trust that is reposed on him. "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee, because he trusteth in thee. Trust ye in the Lord for ever; for in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength." This implies these three things; that they distrust their own strength; that they repair to God for strength; and that, in the confidence that he will afford it, they go forward in the path which he opens.

They distrust their own strength. Most gladly, said the chiefest of the apostles, will I rather glory in my infirmities:—for when I am weak then am I strong. So it is with the people of God generally. Such is their experience at their conversion. They learn by trial that they are weak; in the mighty work of their salvation they faint; in conflict with the opposition that is arrayed against them they have no might; feeling that they have none, they cry, "Lord, save us, we perish;" and so out of weak-

ness are made strong. So it is in their perseverance and progress. The promises are to "the poor and needy;" "the poor in spirit, and the contrite in heart." "The Lord will save the afflicted people, but will bring down the high looks." "When Ephraim spake trembling, he exalted himself in Israel." So it is in the triumphs of grace by their means. They are made sensible, often, by painful dispensations, that it is not their own arm which gets them the victory, not for their own goodness' sake that it is achieved; but that it is by the power and grace of God alone. See Moses, in his youthful ardour, how forward to interpose his arm for the defence of his people; presuming that they would understand how, by him, God designed their deliverance; and, because they did not, how soon to flee into the wilderness; and forty years afterwards, when really called of God to the work, how overwhelmed with a sense of his weakness in comparison with it. See Jehoshaphat, on the eve of a glorious victory over enemies rushing upon the land as a flood. "O our God," said he, "we have no might against this great company that cometh against us, neither know we what to do; but our eyes are unto thee." As with individuals, so also it is with the people of God collectively. See the Israelites in Egypt. It was not enough that they were reduced to the lowest vassalage under a haughty and powerful king. That the mighty hand and the outstretched arm of Jehovah might be more conspicuous in their deliverance, it was necessary to bring them in greater extremity. They must have been driven out in haste, and pursued by Pharaoh and his army, and hemmed in at the shore of the Red Sea. Then it was that the right hand of the Lord got him the victory in their ransom. Such is the method of divine wisdom in dealing with his people. For the Lord shall judge his people and repent himself for his servants, when he seeth that their power is gone and there is none shut up or left.

As they feel their weakness, so also they repair to him. An explicit trust in God is not less indispensable than distrust of other help. Despondency is no less fatal to success than self-confidence; unbelief, than false security. He must be trusted according to his word; our trust in him must be expressed by application in the way provided; and that application must be continued, though to human view it may seem vain. They that *wait* on the Lord shall renew their strength.

And in the confidence that he will sustain them, they go forward in the path which he opens. It was when the man with a withered hand, at the command of Jesus, stretched forth his hand, that he found it obedient to his will. It is they who run that shall not be weary, and they who walk that shall not faint. It is strength in the race, and not before it is begun, that is promised; it is grace in the day, for the day, and not for days to come, that we are warranted to expect. That is not trust in another, which is not obedient to his will. The most wonderful act of faith that perhaps was ever rendered, was acknowledged as an act of obedience. Now I know that thou *fearest God*, said the angel to Abraham, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son from me. Accordingly, at the Red Sea,

Moses was commanded to say to the Israelites, as the test of their trust in the promised salvation of God, "go forward." It was not enough that they cried unto the Lord. They were to prove their sincerity by obedience. Nor were they to wait till the waters were divided; but while yet their only path was in the rolling deep, the word was given, "Speak unto the children of Israel, that they go forward." Such is trust in God. Such is the state of mind in which God gives strength to his people.

1. We may learn from this subject why it is that the people of God sometimes appear like the rest of mankind. When we read the histories of good men, as of Noah, Lot, Abraham, David, and other distinguished saints under the Old Testament and the New, we may wonder to see them at some times so unlike themselves at others; to see them, after having raised our admiration of their constancy in the severest trials, falling before comparatively feeble temptations; to see them weak and frail as others of our sinful race. So in the circle of our acquaintances, we may wonder to find those whom we have seen on some occasions humble, serious, disinterested, and devout, on other occasions proud, passionate, selfish, or vain—altogether unlike, so far as we can perceive, what we had supposed them to be. And some of us may wonder, most of all, to find our ownselves at some times so very different from all that we had been, or thought and hoped ourselves to be, at others. The explanation of this lies in the fact, that neither we nor others have any sufficiency of ourselves. We are too apt to calculate on principles of grace as being in their nature permanent; to imagine that, being once renewed, our disposition to holiness will remain by its own tendencies; that having once begun to love God, we shall continue to love with little variation and little conflict, and to expect that christians around us will, for the same reason, exhibit an unbroken consistency of character. But it is not so. Christians are no less dependent than sinners. They have in themselves "no might." And it is because they forget this; because they lose the deep-felt sense of their weakness, and proportionably remit their watchfulness and prayerfulness, that in the same degree they feel and live as do others. While their course, as a whole, exhibits such unity of character as proves that God will not forsake them, it also exhibits such variation as shows that their strength is in him alone.

2. We may also learn how it is that the people of God sometimes go far beyond themselves in their exercises of holiness and strength of consolation. Whoever is conversant with the Scriptures may easily call to mind instances of this. The apostles on the day of Pentecost, and Stephen in his dying moments, are memorable examples. And who that has been conversant with christians in times of revival, in scenes of affliction, or on their dying beds, has not marked the same thing? Who has never seen in those who have waited on the Lord, when they have come to die, a vividness of spiritual apprehensions; a steadfastness of peace; a benignity, a sweet and heavenly serenity of soul, like the dawn of heaven, beaming forth in their aspect and

accents, entirely beyond what he had been accustomed to see in them. In all this there is only what the Scriptures warrant us to expect of those who make God their trust. We see him giving power to the faint.

3. Sinners have no occasion to fear becoming religious lest they should not hold out. Let them look well to their sincerity; let them see that it is religion itself which they desire, and not the comforts and the safety alone which belong to it; let them be hearty and unreserved in their choice, and in the choice commit themselves to God, through Christ, the Mediator of the new covenant; and they shall find that covenant "well ordered in all things and sure." Sure as God is faithful, not one of them shall be lost; but they all shall be kept by his power, through faith, unto salvation. It is true that many who set out in a religious course draw back, to their shame and ruin; but they were at the first partial and double-minded in their religion; they never cast themselves singly and wholly on God in Christ as their portion and trust; they always sought their own ends in distinction from his glory, and in dependence on themselves, not on his promised grace. No wonder that, in this way, even the youths should faint and the young men should utterly fall. Though it be so, it still remains true, that "they who wait on the Lord shall renew their strength;" instead of losing their religion shall grow stronger and stronger; "shall mount up with wings as eagles; shall run and not be weary, and shall walk and not faint."

Finally, we have no occasion to fear entering upon any path which God opens to us. What though that path be dark, and we know not where it will end? Is it not enough that He who opens it has said, "Fear not, I am with thee?" What though it introduce us to services untried, difficult, and responsible, and the consequences of failure to ourselves and to others be dreadful? Be we only satisfied that those services are really appointed to us, shall we not believe him, when he says, "My grace is sufficient for thee?" What though afflictions repeated and overwhelming lie along that path? Is it not the path marked out for us by the bloody footsteps of our great Forerunner? Is it not in this very way that the God of all grace designs to make us partakers of his glory? Breaking our earthly arm, that we may lean upon himself; drying up our failing streams, that he may bring us to the living fountain; and cutting off our expected delights, that he may make us serene and joyful in himself without them? "O ye afflicted, tossed with a tempest and not comforted, behold and consider that presently your stones shall be laid with fair colors, and your foundations with sapphires. Your windows shall be of agates, and your gates of carbuncles." It is but a handbreadth, ye humble children of sorrow, and you shall be dismissed, refined, and purified by these afflictions, and made meet for glory. Even now the dawn of the upper world beams through the clouds that darken your horizon, and soon those clouds shall all be dispelled; and under the full beams of the Sun of Righteousness shining upon you eternally, you shall say, "In thy presence is fulness of joy, and at thy right hand are pleasures for evermore." And what though

your path-way into this felicity bring you to the river of death,—and there is no turning to the right hand or the left; and there, leaving kindred and friends behind, you must conflict alone with the cold waves? Have you not seen others, fearful as you, when they have come to the cold flood, borne peacefully through? Have you not seen their fears dispelled, the billows parted before them, and the way opened for them to go through dry-shod? And is He who has done this for them less sufficient for you? "Fear not," is his word to every faithful follower. "I am the first and the last. I am he that liveth and was dead; and behold I am alive for evermore, Amen—and have the keys of death and of hell." And will you not commit yourselves to Him in whose heart is such love, and in whose hands is such power? Now unto Him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, unto Him be glory in the church, by Christ Jesus, throughout all ages, world without end.

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SERMON CCLXXXV.

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OUTPOURING OF THE SPIRIT UNDER THE GOSPEL.

"Until the Spirit be poured upon us from on high, and the wilderness be a fruitful field, and the fruitful field be counted for a forest."—Isaiah, 32 : 15.

THIS charpter opens with a glowing reference to the coming and kingdom of Christ. It proceeds to a view of terrible judgements that were to fall on the Jews for rejecting the Messiah. Their rich fields would be overspread with briars and thorns, their palaces forsaken, their strongholds demolished, and their splendid capital become the abode even of wild beasts. This dreary scene would last, the prophet intimates, *until the Spirit were poured out from on high.* Then fruitfulness, peace, and prosperity in every form would return ;—*the wilderness would become a fruitful field, and the fruitful field a forest.* Unquestionably this language is figurative, indicating a change great and delightful indeed, but a change in moral rather than natural scenery. And it is clearly presented as a direct result of the descent of the Holy Ghost.

* The assembly that held its sessions in the first Presbyterian Church, Philadelphia.

To some extent the predictions before us have been fulfilled. The Saviour has come, and laid the foundations of his glorious empire. His countrymen, in a spirit of malignant infidelity, resisted his claims; and they experienced his withering curse. The Spirit has been copiously shed forth; and millions, both Jews and Gentiles, have enjoyed the sanctifying influence. The redeeming process is still advancing; and all nations shall yet joyfully recognize the Son of David as their King.

In this moral movement and triumph, the great Agent is the *Holy Spirit*. Other influences co-operate; but they are all very subordinate, and the achievement is his. This truth is clearly recognized in the text; and no Bible truth is plainer. He enlightens, awakens, convinces. renews, and safely conducts the redeemed sinner through his multiplied perils to the promised rest. It is not my design, however, to dwell on his official work, with the view of explaining and defending it. The truth on this subject is familiar, and admitted, I trust, freely, practically, gratefully. The text is a prediction, looking to events of thrilling interest that were to occur under the Gospel. The general fact presented is the *extraordinary effusion of the Holy Ghost*; and it will be my aim to show,

1. THAT THE OUTPOURING OF THE SPIRIT IS A PROMINENT FEATURE OF THE GOSPEL DISPENSATION,

II. ON WHAT PRINCIPLES THE GRACIOUS INFLUENCE IS BESTOWED.

True, the presence and power of the Spirit were granted in a measure before the advent of the Son. His sanctifying agency is identified with the entire history of holiness. And there are clear traces of piety back through the Jewish nation,—to the deluge,—and even to the children of the first pair. There were exmples of very eminent godliness; and there were times, too, especially among the "chosen people," of extensive religious quickening. And still the heavenly influence is unspeakably *more marked*, as one of the characteristics of Gospel times.

The outpouring of the Spirit, as a leading feature of the Gospel dispensation, was,

I. *A matter of direct prediction by the prophets.*

Said *David*, Heh all come down like rain upon the mown grass; as showers that water the earth;—and *Isaiah*, I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry

ground; I will pour my Spirit upon thy seed, and my blessing upon thine offspring; and they shall spring up as among the grass, as willows by the water courses;—and *Ezekiel*, Neither will I hide my face any more from them; for I have poured out my Spirit on the house of Israel, saith the Lord God;—and *Zechariah*, I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of suplications; and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn. In *Joel* there is a passage of still plainer and broader import. It shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophecy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions. And also upon the servants, and upon the handmaids, in those days, will I pour out my Spirit. This prophecy, it will be recollected, was referred to by Peter on the memorable day of Pentecost, and its fulfilment avowed in the wonders wrought under his preaching.

Such predictions, it will not be doubted, all look to events under the Gospel. Their reference to the work of the Spirit is also explicit. And they exhibit his influence by imagery adapted certainly to make a strong impression of its extent and power. It is not simply the gentle dew of night: it is the copious shower of summer. It is not limited to any point of time, or to any given spot, or to any particular class: it falls upon high and low, young and old, of all nations, at all periods. It is presented as a standing and striking characteristic of the Christian economy. Is any feature recognized with more explicitness or brighter coloring?

2. *The extraordinary effusion of the Spirit is implied in such predictions as relate to the general triumphs of the Gospel.*

The Lord shall comfort Zion; He will comfort all her waste places. Break forth into joy; sing together, ye waste places. Who are these that fly like a cloud, and as doves to their windows? The Lord hath made bare his holy arm in the eyes of all nations; and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God. I will give the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession. The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ. He shall have dominion also from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth.

Prophecy of this character is abundant. It holds up a mighty moral renovation. And the magnitude of the achieve-

ment is sufficient evidence of peculiar displays of divine power. What other agency can meet successfully the array of ignorance, prejudice, and stratgem; and carry forward the cross against principalities and powers? In such a conflict, enterprise and energy are certainly right: But the Church, with all her combinations, and all her zeal and courage, has strength only in the Lord and in the power of his might. She can plant and water, but God only giveth the increase. And with him all things are possible. Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low; and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain; and the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together: for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it.

3. *The Spirit was promised by Christ as a prominent feature in the progress of the Gospel.*

I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever, even the Spirit of truth. It is expedient for you that I go away; and if I go not away the comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart I will send him unto you. And when he is come he will reprove the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment. He shall glorify me, for he shall receive of mine, and shall show it unto you. Tarry ye in Jerusalem until ye be endued with power from on high.

These pledges are exceedingly explicit. They set forth the personality and agency of the Holy Ghost with a distinctness utterly unknown before. They are also rich in consolation. To the disciples it was an unspeakable privilege to have the presence and counsels of their Master. But in the promised Spirit they would find a substitute of even better adaptation to the exigencies of themselves and the world. Filling all space, though unseen and unheard, he would be an abiding source of light and comfort to the good; inspiring them with enterprise, and courage, and supernatural power. He would quicken perception, and wake up conscience, and lay open eternal scenes, in a manner to overawe and subdue the wicked. And thus he would carry Christianity in triumph from city to city, and from state to state, to the quiet possession of the whole earth.

Who does not discern a *fitness* in the arrangement we are noticing? The incarnation was the opening of a wonderful dispensation. No epoch of time has its circumstance of such

absorbing interest. The Son of God stood out to view conspicuously as attempting the recovery of a lost province. He executed the needful mission. For a time he prosecuted the enterprise in person; opposition was roused; expectation was kindled. What but a progress of peculiar power and triumph could correspond to a commencement so imposing? What else could break the exultation of his enemies over his crucifixion, and dissipate the gloom of his friends?

That the outpouring of the Spirit is a prominent feature of the Gospel dispensation is evident.

4. *As a matter of History.* On the day of Pentecost was preached the first sermon after the assension of Christ. It was an occasion of indiscribable interest. And what gave to it its extraordinary character? There is no evidence that, as one of the Jewish festivals, *that* Pentecost excited any unwonted attention. As usual, there was a large assemblage, and from diverse provinces. The mere zeal and intrepidity of the disciples could have excited but a limited notice, and caused but a transient impression. The great signalizing circumstance was the presence of the Spirit, quickening intellect, imparting the gift of tongues, allaying prejudice, and carrying conviction to the hearts of three thousand. In a few days the gracious visitation was repeated, and five thousand were added to the disciples. Thus Christianity secured at once a footing in distant cities and provinces, triumphing, to the astonishment of both friends and foes. The evidence of divine interposition was overwhelming. Never were results on any other subject so utterly disproportionate to the means employed. And we do not wonder that an opposition, resolute and powerful, was soon completely palsied.

But the demonstration of the Spirit was not to be temporary. It was a vital and marked provision of the new dispensation. And it has been developed conspicuously in the progress of the Gospel. The church has had its seasons of dismal declension: but it has had, too, its periods of signal revival and enlargement. By what is the present age more specifically and strongly characterized, than by the outpouring of the Spirit? This it is which is giving vitality to truth, multiplying the good, kindling a bold religious enterprise, and producing aggressive movements of every form, and in every direction, against the empire of darkness. Let the divine mercy but be gratefully recognized, and the heavenly influence properly cherished, and the hopes of true benevolence can hardly compass too much.

We have, then, explicit prediction relating to the descent of the Spirit; we have prophecy concerning the general triumph of the Gospel, involving the same fact; we have the plain pledges of Christ a little before he finished his mission; we have the voice of history; all showing that the outpouring of the Spirit is a prominent feature in the Gospel dispensation. It has no characteristic of more striking aspect, or more vital importance to its success. It is the very secret of all its past achievements, and the pledge of its universal triumph.

We are to inquire.

II. *On what principles the gracious influence is bestowed?* And,

1. It is given *in connection with Gospel light and ordinances.*

It is not the way of the Spirit to operate independently of means. His general instrumentality is *religious truth.* By this he informs the understanding, quickens the conscience, rouses all the active principles; and thus he brings up a new and nobler moral character. The intervention of such secondary influence is clear from the whole tenor of Scripture. Of his own will begat he us by the word of truth. Sanctify them through thy truth, thy word is truth.

But while in the great work of renovation the Spirit thus employs divine truth, it is not his plan to any considerable extent, certainly to make the presentation himself. We know he could do it with utmost ease. He communicated treasures of knowledge to Abraham, Moses, Samuel, Isaiah, and Paul. What can hinder his access with stores as rich to every human mind? And yet he has finished his revelations, and committed them to his people to be distributed over the earth. And without their co-operation darkness prevails, and the work of salvation is stayed.

This order of divine grace is implied in the very *appointments* of God, as well as directly revealed. Where no vision is, the people perish. It pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe. And hence he instituted the ministry—he appointed the Sabbath and its ordinances—he enjoined parental supervision and instruction—he threw out precepts urging his people to unremitted self-denial, enterprise and activity, as laborers together with himself. And who can question the meaning of these multiplied and solemn arrangements? In view of them what Christian can fail to canvass carefully his own responsibilities n reference to the great cause of salvation?

As a matter of *history*, too, when has the Spirit been poured out except in connection with Christian instruction? and when, to any considerable extent, independently of the regular institutions of religion? If God can consistently dispense with such instrumentality, why is his Spirit, age after age, withheld from the immense Pagan and Mohammedan community? And why in Christian lands are the waste places left, like the mountains of Gilboa, without rain or dew? As a general fact, none is better established from observation than that divine influences follow in the track of religious culture. It is so in respect to individuals. It is so in respect to communities.

There is, then, a *preparation* for the visits of the Sanctifier. And as to its character, God has not left us in the dark. We must have our Sabbaths, and churches, and Bibles, and ministry. We must have our domestic religion, and other social organizations for religious influence. We must unlock before men the treasures of inspiration, and lay open the realities of the divine character and government, and draw aside the veil that hides eternal scenes. Let intellect be well informed, and conscience and passion roused by such applications—let God's revealed system of culture be faithfully honored—and it will be no presumption to anticipate the renovating work on the heart. He that goeth forth weeping, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him. But,

2. The Spirit is poured out in connection *with efficient Christian and ministerial action.*

It is not enough that the *form* of religious institutions be maintained. There must be the *substance.* It is not enough that general views of the Christian system be acquired. The more comprehensive, and accurate, and vivid the perceptions the better. And the more familiar one is with the Gospel, in the detail of its glorious and awful revelations, the more hopeful is his case. Hence little is to be expected from abstruse, dark, tame, and infrequent exhibitions of the truth. It is not such efforts that the good Spirit has been wont very greatly to honor.

The amount of visible success is not indeed a perfect criterion of fidelity. Far from it. The field may be new and rugged, and consequently the immediate harvest be limited. In a given case there may be numerous and formidable embarrassments to the proper action of the truth and Spirit,

abridging and delaying the desired result, and taxing severely the patience and faith of God's people. At the same time little will be any where achieved independently of prompt, energetic, and persevering exertion. There is a connection betwixt means and ends in the moral as well as natural world. It is a connection that gives scope for any degree of industry, energy, and skill. And no well-directed efforts have ever been misapplied. The harvest has very uniformly corresponded with the character of the labor bestowed. The liberal soul has been made fat. The church that has sowed sparingly has reaped sparingly, while that which has sowed bountifully has also reaped bountifully. Where is the intelligent, enterprising, spiritual fraternity, that has not been refreshed by the frequent visits of the Spirit? And where is the discriminating, evangelical, and devout ministry, that has not been honorably approved by the presence and power of the Holy Ghost? I know that Paul may plant and Apollos water in vain, except God give the increase. I know, too, that he has always been pleased o grant his blessing and bestow the increase in a wonderful proportion to the wisdom and efficiency of the labor. And what child of grace would have it otherwise? Who would have him reverse the economy of his mercy, and become the great public patron of indolence and worldliness? It would not only be bringing reproach on himself, but haltings and ruin on his church. How is Christian grace ever brightened and strengthened but in trial? Who have risen high in godliness, and in their example administered instruction and reproof that have been felt, and by their unquestionable union to Christ, and their brilliant triumph at the grave, extorted from worldlings, and even infidels, the aspiration, Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his? And the discipline that nurtures individual grace, is adapted to preserve and elevate the church at large. It would be no mercy in the Sovereign—it would rather be a judgment—to withdraw her responsibilities and give her respite from toil and trial. The effects of ease and secular prosperity have been seen in other times—seen in her rapid and almost irrecoverable decline. As a means of spirituality she needs discipline. As a means of perpetuating her existence, and extending her moral sway, she needs to be tasked to her utmost capacity: and she mistakes her highest interest if she ever evades hardship, or goes to the work of God

with a reluctant step, or thinks a moment of having too much to do. The great Agent might spare her service with infinitely less inconvenience than she could lose the opportunity of laboring in his vineyard.

3. The Spirit is poured out *in answer to prayer.*

On this point the teachings of the Bible and divine providence, are exceedingly clear. We are directed to make supplication for every desirable object. But prayer for the *Spirit* is singled out, and in one form and another very specially marked. It is the richest of God's gifts; and there is a propriety in its being sought with utmost importunity. And the encouragement to such prayer is most ample. Nor is there reasonable hope in any other form. A new heart will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you; yet for all this will I be inquired of by the house of Israel to do this thing for them. You have God's views of the duty and value of prayer in his direction to the prophet. Prophecy and say, Come from the four winds, O Breath, breathe upon the slain that they may live. You have its necessity and worth very emphatically and fully presented by Christ. Ask, and ye shall receive. If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him,

In perfect harmony with the Bible, is the unbroken testimony from history. What interest is thrown around that upper chamber where the hundred and twenty met on the day of Pentecost. What scenes attended that season of associated supplication. How illustrously was the promise fulfilled; before they call I will answer; and while they are yet speaking I will hear. And when and where has the Spirit ever been copiously shed forth but in answer to fervent entreaty? And how abundant and striking have been the answers to prayer, when the church has felt her impotency, and grasped by faith the divine promises. How often has the blessing gone beyond even her largest expectations, so that she has stood still, and witnessed the salvation of God with mingled gratitude, humility, and wonder. When and where have showers of the heavenly influence descended, while the brotherhood, as a body, were immersed in secular and selfish concerns, and heartless in their supplications? And what surer presage of the sweeping victories of the Spirit have you ever desired, than a general sentiment of re-

gard for Christ, and solicitude for souls, and a general spirit of agonizing intercession? And with what courage and comfort, in such connections, have you entered the field as laborers together with God.

The foregoing view has its important practical bearings.

1. *It leads us to hope for revivals of religion of increasing power.*

The work of the Spirit is a leading feature of the Gospel. The gracious influence accompanies christianity wherever in its purity it goes, and it is the secret of its sanctifying power. It has already been bestowed to a very marked extent. And the Bible gives no intimation of a suspension, but rather leads us to calculate on its continuance as a vital characteristic of the Christian economy. And why in respect to the frequency and extent of revivals, should there not be *advancement?* We should anticipate it, certainly, from the whole analogy of God's dispensations. In all his transactions there has been progress. There was progress in the work of *creation*—progress of very interesting character. In *religion* he has been working new developments from the beginning of time. The work of direct *revelation* ran through a long series of ages, the revalations becoming plainer, and fuller, and richer, at every stage. The scheme of *redemption* was opened by degrees. Its whole execution was stamped with the aspect of progressive movement. And since the advent of Christ, so much more striking is the *outpouring of the Spirit* than in the earlier periods, that it is almost a peculiarity of the Gospel.

As a system of religion, christianity is advancing. It is to be the religion of the world. And every important achievement involves the interposition of the Spirit. And why should not this feature in the Gospel be developed as conspicuously as any other, and in its properly advancing proportions?

The Spirit is poured out, too, as we have seen, in a manner to put honor upon the *truth* and upon *instrumental agency* generally. Connected with this fact we can see a pledge of unprecedented displays of his quickening power. The compass of evangelical influence is rapidly enlarging. The means of throwing divine truth before the world are fast multiplying. The church is training her choicest sons for the holy altar; and the ministry is increasing in number and perhaps efficiency. The powers of the religious press are

fast augmenting. Christian benevolence is extending and perfecting her schemes of religious enterprise. The sublimest truths of revelation are coming to be put into a form adapted to the comprehension of the unlettered. Bible-classes, and Sunday-schools, and other expedients, are bringing the mass of *children* under a strong evangelical influence, rendering them fit subjects for the action of the Spirit before inveterate principles and habits of ungodliness shall have secured their ruin. And in such constantly increasing favorable circumstances it will indeed be strange if the visits of the Holy One do not become more common, and of a more imposing character.

We cannot doubt, indeed, that the time is hastening when God will emphatically dwell with men. The dreary periods of declension will gradually shorten and disappear. The reviving influences will come with more frequency, with greater power, to a wider extent, with increased continuance, till ultimately an unbroken cloud may overspread the world, giving the fertility and beauty of Eden to the whole earth. These are unquestionably the scenes that are to usher in the latter day. And if all the expounders of prophecy have not been mistaken, the process is to go on with a vastly accelerated movement. How else shall the mighty moral revolution be effected? How else shall states, and empires, and continents almost, be brought up from their deep degradation to light and purity, and that in the short period anticipated? With man this is impossible; but with God all things are possible. He can rend the heavens; and the mountains shall flow down at his presence. He can make the wilderness a fruitful field, and the fruitful field a rich waving forest. He can work, and who shall let it?

Let, then, the *revival sentiment* be extended and strengthened among us. It is the pure sentiment of Christianity. And nothing is so essential to our growth, and efficiency, and glory, as a branch of the great Christian family. Let God's grace, in the signal descent of his Spirit on our churches the last year, be very gratefully recognized and hailed as the promise of still brighter days. Let no heart faint, and no hand falter in the momentous matter of *revivals*. Though they have had their counterfeits they are a blessed reality. And like other gifts of God, they must be valued, desired, and sought, by united and earnest prayer, and the untiring use of all Scriptural means.

2. *The subject holds up forcibly the responsibility of Christians.*

at the present time. Their responsibility has never been trivial. It has always been of a nature to afford a powerful stimulus to fidelity. But as time goes on, and all gospel designs are advancing to their consummation, it is manifestly increasing. The Holy Spirit does not work alone. He requires their efficient co-operation. There are certain fixed principles on which his reviving influences are poured out, as fixed, perhaps, as any other law of the infinite Sovereign, and they involve prompt, energetic, interprising, whole-hearted Christian action, as well as earnest prayer.

Is it a privilege, brethren, to live in these latter days? Do signs of one sort and another betoken great moral changes? Is there reason to hope for vastly more decisive exhibitions of God's gracious presence? Is the era of revivals in glorious progress? How can it be otherwise than that unwonted responsibilities are upon you? It is yours to watch the indications of divine Providence; to hail the coming of the Spirit with gratitude; to seek untiringly his holy presence; and in every form to prepare the way, especially by getting and keeping your hearts in a right flame. It is yours to pour floods of Bible light upon the world, Christian and pagan, upon all ranks and classes, the learned and ignorant, the sober and vicious, the old and young. It rests with you to make a fair and strong presentation of eternal truth to the unsanctified intellect, and conscience, and heart of the world. It is a labor *the Spirit does not choose to perform.* It rests with you to cultivate the field, that God may in mercy grant the fruit in its season. And why should you live and be a Christian in days of the peculiar manifestation of the Spirit, if you cannot cherish the self-denial, and spirituality, and interprise, for which the exigencies call? Why were you not born at a period of less stir and promise —why not born a thousand years ago—if you cannot come up to the high mark of generosity and energy your Lord has fixed for the church of this day?

You will look with satisfaction at the signs of the times, and sympathise strongly in the movements of the Holy Ghost, and labor as if you hoped and rejoiced that the redemption of the world was drawing near. I plead for nothing boisterous, or arrogant, or obtrusive in the exhibitions of your zeal for God and souls. The Gospel only reprobates such loftiness and rashness. But still I urge the reality of personal responsibility. The humblest of believers has his "talent," that must neither be perverted nor

buried. He has his place and his importance under the common Master. His measure of duty is his amount of opportunity. And you need not the aid of church office, or high endowments, or great notoriety, to exert a healthful moral influence, and be a minister of salvation to many a lost soul. The grand secret of usefulness, as well as essence of piety, is an evangelical spirit. Cultivate the temper of Christ, and it will be easy, like him, to go about doing good.

Probably the sentiment of *indivldual* Christian responsibility is extending and deepening. And why should it not? The Bible urges it. Divine Providence is decisively encouraging it. When the Holy Spirit is abroad, predisposing to religious inquiry, a little effort leads often to momentuous results. Thousands are now rejoicing in hope who were first put upon serious thought in connection with very humble instrumentality. Let old and young, professing godliness, realize their high calling. Each has his proper sphere, and should be about his Father's business. And, were all walking in the Spirit, and making the most of their powers and opportunities, what triumphs of grace might gladden the world! And how painful the contrast. Who can estimate the mischeif and sin of a dubious example, and of keeping back from the help of the Lord when religious tenderne8 and thought are abroad? You grieve the Spirit. You quiet conscience. You encourage procrastination. You lead, unintentionally, indeed, immortals away from hope and heaven.

3, *The subject is of special interest to the ministers of Christ.* Every disciple is committed for the service of God; but the minister is *officially* devoted to the cause of religion. And it is his high honor to co-operate more directly and exclusively with the great Captain of salvation. His labors and responsibilities, at any time, are enough to crush an angel. But they seem to be augmenting every year. When God is pouring out his Spirit it is the season of harvest; and there is not an hour to be lost. When there are decisive tokens of his readiness to bless, his servants must be all on the alert, and task every power for the required labor. And who is blind to the fact that we are now passing through an era of religious revival? Where can you preach the Gospel of salvation without a listening ear, I may almost say without a melting heart? The field is the world, and it is all open. The summons from God to his ambassadors to labor directly for the conversion of souls is distinct and loud. It is a voice not for any single class of peculiar *name* and *gifts*, but for *every*

man invested with the sacred office. In carrying on revivals in our churches, perhaps *pastors* have not all felt sufficiently their personal responsibility and importance. Foreign aid may unquestionably sometimes be brought in advantageously. The exigency may call for more labor than the pastor can seasonably execute. And associated action, if harmonious, is always effective. But when the comforter is on his way, and souls are to be waked up and moulded for heaven, it is no time for the pastor to stand aside in utter silence for some one else, as if there were a *quality* of work for which he was incompetent. Why should the immediate co-operation with the Holy Ghost be left for a favored few? Distinguished lights, indeed, there have always been in the church in every department of labor—in theological disquisition—in benevolent enterprise—in revivals of religion. And they will live in the affections of the good to the end of time. Gradation in everything is the order of divine providence. But what minister can plead the diversity of gifts and graces as an apology for attempting and accomplishing little? God has given you a field to cultivate in *person*, not by *proxy*. The *church* needs and expects your enlightening and stimulating influence. But the Gospel everywhere and in all times, seeks still grander results—it aims at the *conversion of the unholy*. And God has placed them by scores under your special charge. And he has appointed you to no labor for which you can be innocently unqualified. Take up, then, I affectionately beseech you, I solemnly charge you, my dear brother, in common with myself, the great work in earnest. Preach and pray for the awakening and salvation for the dead in sin; do it with an eye single to the glory of God, and most likely you will give back your commission with honorable testimonials of your fidelity. And if the Spirit shall signally bless your generous aims and efforts, who can anticipate the richness of reward that awaits you? Those spiritual children will follow you through life, in affection and prayer. They will remember you in death. They will be your joy at the judgment, before the throne. And through divine grace you shall shine as the brightness of the firmament, and as the stars, for ever and ever.

And what can be said of a tame and heartless, or misdirected ministry in such a day as this? Who sees not woes unutterable for the watchman who can sleep at his post, or busy himself with trifles, with the perils of spiritual death thick about him, and that, too, when the good Spirit is hovering

over his charge, waiting to second his very first and faintest note of alarm? Privilege and responsibility always go hand in hand. And the privilege of being a minister of Jesus Christ has never been so great as now. As stewards of God may we all seek the baptism of the Holy Ghost, and labor with a zeal and efficiency becoming our office and our age.

4. *Let ministers and all Christians aim at more uniform and marked "fellowship of the Spirit."*

Notions vague, wild, and even impious, have often been cherished in regard to the Spirit's influence. And still his presence with believers is a reality as plain as any Bible truth, or any matter of consciousness. Whence but from him did the primitive disciples derive their wonderful gifts, and courage, and success? But his presence and aid were not granted for a single emergency, or any limited period; they were to be identified with the whole future history of the church. "I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you forever." The Scriptures on this subject too naturally make the impression of a *strong sympathy and a close alliance*. Like the Son of God in his humiliation, the blessed Spirit stoops to a kind of companionship with the saints. Apostles speak of them as the "temple of the Holy Ghost;" as being "led by the Spirit;" as "filled with the Spirit;" as having "the witness of the Spirit," "the communion of the Holy Ghost." And may it not be hoped that, as time goes on, the bonds of this hallowed association will be strengthened? Will not the church better understand its nature and worth, and be less interruptedly blessed with its benefits? Is anything more needed by her pastors, her members at large? Here and there one has had precious experience, and made delightful exhibitions of the reality and value of this holy fellowship. It has enriched their hopes, brightened their views of truth, and enlarged their aims. It has secured discretion, steadiness, and energy in action. It has infused ferver, compass, pertinence, and power into their prayers. Their whole bearing as Christians has at once fastened the conviction that they were acting under impulses, and breathing an atmosphere of no common purity, and fitted for achievements of no ordinary moment. Why should not others, of equal weakness and equal responsibility, covet the same advantages, and reach the same moral elevation? We all want the temper that springs from reverential and humble familiarity with God. We want the habit of planning and acting in concert with the Holy Ghost. This surely is the true life of

godliness. And in it we might find safety, and comfort, and strength. In days of the peculiar manifestation of the Spirit, shall it not become the general and settled character of the church? How bright would be the promise of, peace, purity, efficiency?

5. *The case of such as live impenitent under the Gospel in this day, is peculiarly alarming.* They live at a period of special and growing mercy. Those influences which secure salvation, have greatly increased in number and power. Divine truth is made plain. It is held up to the mind more steadily than formerly, and the Holy Ghost more emphatically dwells with men. It is a time when salvation is brought near, and has to be deliberately and resolutely thrust aside. So abundant are the outpourings of the Spirit, that it seems, fellow-sinners, as if you could be lost only by carrying on a steady and desperate resistance to the Holy Ghost. At every stage you are subject, more or less, to his influence. You hear his gentle monitions in childhood; you feel his presence as you go to the sanctuary, as you listen to parental admonition, as you read the New Testament, or the religious tale, or the simple discussion suited to your years. You are followed by the heavenly influence up to manhood. He speaks to you sometimes indeed with a gentle, and sometimes with a heavier voice; but he speaks and you understand his language. He allures to heaven; he warns of perdition; and no sinner living under these strong religious influences can go down to ruin under only the measure of guilt that has oppressed the wicked and the lost of other times. If he perish, unspeakably better had it been for him to have gone to the abyss there thousand years ago. Let the careless then wake up—wake, without a moment's delay, to a view of their state and prospects. What meanest thou, O sleeper? Escape from the fearful precipice on which you stand. Yield to the multiplied influences that seek your eternal life. Hearken to conscience, and the Bible, and Providence, and the Spirit, all mingling their efforts to pluck you as a brand from the burning. It is desperate infatuation to delay. As facilities for salvation multiply, the preparation for life or death is hastened. The decisions of a brief period will settle your eternal character and state. In these latter days, and under such floods of light as are poured upon yourselves, men are not going to devote their youth to pursuits of ambition or gain, to be brought into the holy kingdom in advanced or even middle life. O that you were wise, that you understood this, that you would consider your latter end!

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SERMON CCLXXXVI.

A SERMON DELIVERED AT THE FUNERAL OF THE

Rev. JOHN HUBBARD CHURCH, D. D.,

Who died at Pelham, N. H., June 12, 1840, aged 68.

BY LEONARD WOODS, D. D.

PROFESSOR IN THE THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY, ANDOVER.

Brethren and Friends: I stand here to-day in compliance with the request of that beloved brother, who now sleeps in death. I visited him the last day but one before he died. A short time before I left him, he requested me to preach at his funeral; then taking his Bible, which he had by his pillow, and with his feeble hand holding it out to me, and pointing to a particular passage, he said, "I wish you to preach from that text." It was the Second Epistle to Timothy, 1: 18. "*The Lord grant unto him, that he may find mercy of the Lord in that day.*" He then proceeded to say: "I want you to dwell particularly upon this idea, *that we depend on the mercy of the Lord for our salvation; and that ministers of the Gospel, as well as others, will need that mercy at the judgment day.*" He then repeated the suggestion, "What I wish you particularly to show is, *that the salvation of ministers, as well as of all others, depends on the sovereign mercy of God; and that it is infinitely important that we obtain that mercy now and hereafter.* Dwell upon the idea, *that we shall need to find mercy of the Lord at the last day.*" This is the sentiment which he enlarged upon in various ways; and in the whole of that interview he showed, that the doctrine of salvation by the free mercy and grace of God, through the righteousness of Jesus Christ, was the ground of his hope and the spring of his consolations on his dying bed.

Deeply impressed with the recollection of that last interview,

and with the suggestions then made respecting the object of this funeral sermon, I know not how I can better discharge the solemn duty which devolves on me, than to exhibit *the doctrine of salvation by grace, as exemplified in that dear minister of Christ, whose lifeless body now lies before us.* And permit me to say, that what I shall advance on this subject will not be a matter of conjecture; nor will it be made out from a mere general acquaintance with Dr. Church as a minister of the Gospel; but will be the result of my intercourse and friendship with him for almost fifty years; an intercourse and friendship so free, familiar, and intimate, that I have as true a knowledge of his mind and heart, as one man can have of the mind and heart of another in the present world. Besides this, I speak in the presence of a church and society for whom he labored in the ministry thirty-seven years, and who will judge of the correctness of my remarks.

I invite you, then, to contemplate *the doctrine of salvation by grace, as exemplified in our departed brother; and particularly as it was the object of his faith, the matter of his inward experience, and the spring of his pious and useful life.*

In the first place, the doctrine of salvation by grace was *the object of his faith.* He regarded this as *the essence of the Gospel—the great truth,* in which all other truths of revelation centre. He believed, as the followers of Christ in all ages have believed, *that the salvation of men is wholly of God; that it originated in his eternal and unchangeable love; that it is entirely and pre-eminently a work of divine mercy and grace towards the ill-deserving and the miserable.*

The nature and the method of Gospel salvation implies, that man is an apostate being, alienated from God, dead in sin, totally lost, without any power to atone for his sins, and without any spring of holiness or tendency to obedience in himself. This ruined state of the human family is pre-supposed in the work of redemption. Christ came to seek and save that which was lost; to save men from their sins; so that all to whom the work of redeeming mercy can apply are depraved and lost. This depraved and lost state must not, however, be viewed as *the calamity* of *innocent* beings. The posterity of Adam, according to the Scriptures, are all *sinners.* The evil which is in them is *moral* evil, and it is *their own,* for which they are justly exposed to the divine displeasure; and their condemnation is an act of God's *righteousness,* as lawgiver and judge. Such was the belief of our lamented brother. He looked upon the law of God, and the

plan of his providential government, as holy, just, and good. He believed the divine appointment, connecting the character and condition of Adam's posterity with his conduct, to have been an act not only of *sovereignty*, but of *wisdom* and *righteousness*. With his views of the divine character, he wanted nothing to satisfy him that the constitution or appointment, so plainly and so emphatically asserted in Rom. 5: 12–19, was just and right, but the simple fact that it was *the appointment of God*. And he wanted nothing to satisfy him that it was the appointment of God but *the declaration of an inspired writer*. This was the end of the matter. He considered it a point of doctrine not *to be made out by human reasoning and philosophy*, but to be taught by revelation—a doctrine to be shaped and determined, not by the weakness and shallowness of the *human* mind, but by the unsearchable and boundless wisdom of the *divine* mind.

Here, then, the work of salvation by grace comes in. God so loved the world—the alienated, sinful world—that he gave his only begotten Son to die for them. And the Saviour came and actually died for them when they were enemies. To deliver them from the curse of the law, he was made a curse for them. By his obedience and death he made propitiation for sin, and procured forgiveness and eternal life for all believers. This was the faith of Dr. Church. He believed the finished righteousness of Christ, consisting in his perfect obedience and vicarious sufferings, to be the only ground of our forgiveness, the grand, meritorious cause of salvation; as it is written, *there is no other name under heaven given among men whereby we can be saved, but the name of Jesus*. And while Jesus is the *only* Saviour, he is also *all-sufficient, able to save the chief of sinners, and to save to the uttermost;* so that no one need to despair or be driven back on account of the greatness of his sins. The salvation to be obtained is *salvation by grace;* a free, gratuitous salvation, not resting at all on any moral worth in us, but springing wholly from the eternal love and mercy of God. Such a salvation, and such only, is adapted to those who have destroyed themselves, and have not now, and never can have, any worthiness to entitle them to the divine favor. To those who are in this condition Jesus Christ is presented as a complete Saviour, in whom all fulness dwells; and those who are ready to perish, are invited to come to him and receive of his fulness, that all their need may be supplied. Thus the door of mercy is opened; a Saviour unspeakably precious and glorious, and every way suited to our

case, is revealed, and we are called upon by the voice of infinite majesty and infinite love to receive him. Oh! how many times, and with what affectionate earnestness has that tongue, which is now silent in death, proclaimed this glorious Gospel doctrine, this provision of mercy for the salvation of men! And how feelingly did he dwell upon it in that last happy hour which I spent with him, just before his decease!

But it is implied in the doctrine of salvation by grace, which is taught in the Scriptures, and which our departed brother so cordially believed, that men in their natural state will not come to Christ that they may have life; that, while left to themselves, they will be governed by that carnal mind which is enmity against God, and disobedience to his law; and, consequently, that their recovery to holiness, as really as their forgiveness, must be of God. He calls sinners with a holy calling; not according to their works, but according to his own purpose and grace. He sends his Spirit to convince them of sin, and to bring them to receive Christ as he is offered in the Gospel. They are born of God. The commencement and progress of their renewal to holiness, is "*not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.*" Their obedience springs not from any power or principle of action naturally in them, but from the divine Spirit. He works in them all the good pleasure of his goodness, and the work of faith with power. Every Christian virtue is the fruit, not of man's fallen nature, but of the Holy Spirit. The application of redemption to sinners is to be ascribed wholly to God. He turns them, and they are turned. He gives them repentance, and they repent. He works faith in them, and they believe. They love, when he sheds abroad his love in their hearts by the Holy Ghost. They obey, when he writes his law in their hearts. So the prophets and apostles taught; and so our dear brother believed, so he conversed, and so he preached. Nor did he trouble himself to show *how* our entire and constant dependence on the Spirit of God is to be reconciled to our free, moral agency. He knew them to *be* reconcilable, because he knew them both to be true. He believed their consistency as fully as though he could have shown, with perfect clearness, *how* they are consistent. He left the actual reconciling of them to be made out where only it can be well made out, that is, *in the inward experience and consciousness of Christians.*

An important part of salvation is *the justification of those who*

believe; which is an act of God's free grace, wherein he pardons all our sins, and accepts us as righteous in his sight, not for our works, and not for any merit in our repentance or faith, but altogether on account of Christ as our atoning High Priest, and on the ground of his death and intercession. The apostle, Rom. 4: 6, speaks of God's *imputing righteousness without works.* The merit of Christ's obedience and sufferings, the whole merit of his mediatorial character and work, is imputed to believers—is so made over to them, so reckoned to their account, that it avails to their benefit, and they receive the blessings of it as really, as though they themselves were righteous. They are justified by faith—a faith which falls in with the scheme of grace revealed in the Gospel, and receives Christ as the only Saviour, and the blessings of salvation as a free gift. Thus the whole of salvation comes from our God and Saviour, and will be forever to the praise of the glory of his grace.

This work of salvation is so carried on in the souls of the redeemed, that they are secured against final apostacy, gradually delivered from the sin that dwells in them, and advanced from one degree of sanctification to another, till they are made perfect in holiness, and admitted to the inheritance of the saints in light. There they will receive their reward; but it is a reward, *not of debt, but of grace.* They will not stand upon their own merit at the bar of justice. The sentiment will be as deeply fixed in their hearts at the judgment-day, as it ever was before; "If thou, Lord, shouldst mark iniquity, O Lord, who could stand?" Their entrance into the heavenly world will be as much a matter of grace, as their renewal by the Spirit, or the forgiveness of their sins when they first believed. So our dear brother regarded it, living and dying. Among his last words, he said, with great earnestness: "We shall need to find mercy of the Lord at the last day."

It was also his serious and consoling belief, that the Lord Jesus will, according to his promise, carry on this gracious work of salvation in the church and in the world, till all who were given him of the Father shall come to him, and the innumerable and glorious multitude of his people shall be presented, without spot, before the throne of God, and thus the work of grace be brought to its final consummation.

But this doctrine of salvation by grace is so extensive, that I can do nothing on this occasion, but give you some of its out-

lines. The subject can never be exhausted. It will be the theme of devout and happy contemplation to the saints in heaven through everlasting ages.

Now when I say that this doctrine was the object of faith to our departed brother, I say nothing which distinguishes him from others. The belief of the doctrine is common to all evangelical ministers and Christians. But if Dr. Church was not distinguished from ministers and Christians generally by *what* he believed, he was by the *manner* of his believing, that is, by the *strength* and *constancy* of his faith. Many who really believe the Gospel doctrine of divine grace, believe it feebly and imperfectly. Their faith is partial, divided, and fluctuating. Other things occupy their minds, and occasion hesitation and doubt. But it was the happiness of our brother, that he held this great and essential doctrine with a strong and steady faith,—a faith which rested, with full confidence, on the sure word of God. He was firmly anchored; and no violence of winds or waves could move him. His faith was too powerful to be shaken by speculative objections. It was proof against every form of opposition. Like Abraham, he was strong in faith, giving glory to God. Whether he conversed, or preached, or prayed, he showed that the things revealed in the Scriptures respecting the salvation of sinners were all *realities* to him,—*present realities*,—*certainties*. He would have doubted his own existence, or the existence of God, as soon as he would have doubted the doctrines of grace. And with this firm, unwavering faith, which is of more value than all that the world holds dear, he, of course, gave great *prominence* to the doctrines of grace. If we believe these things doubtingly, we shall be likely to regard them as of little value, and to place them in the back ground. When the apostle gave such prominence to the doctrine of Christ crucified, and resolved to know nothing else in comparison, he showed that he believed it confidently,—believed it with all his heart. In reality, the doctrines of grace are of such a nature that, if they are *true* doctrines, they are *chief* doctrines. We cannot heartily believe them, without regarding them as of the *first consequence* in the system of divine truth, and giving them, as the apostle did, the *highest place*. It is, moreover, a fact, that the great and comprehensive doctrine of salvation by grace, when rightly apprehended and firmly believed, reflects a clear light on all other related subjects, and helps us to dispose of them justly. It

also helps us to detect error. For whatever interferes with this chief truth, or leads us to consider it as less important than the apostle represented it to be, we know to be false; just as we know any opinion in philosophy or ethics to be false, which would withdraw our homage from God, or our confidence from his word. If we build upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, *Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone*, our edifice will have symmetry, beauty, and strength. It was this which gave the stamp of excellence to the faith of our lamented brother, and made it like the faith of the apostles and first Christians. He made *Christ the chief corner stone.* Salvation by grace through the blood of the cross, was the grand article of his faith. And it was by this, as a test, that he determined the truth or falsity of other doctrines. And as he held this great Gospel doctrine in so high and commanding a light, he was enabled to assign their proper places to other doctrines subordinate to this. He regarded all the truths of revelation as precious. But he endeavoured to judge of their comparative value according to the inspired standard, making that first, which the sacred writers make first, and those secondary and subordinate, which they make secondary and subordinate.

But I must dismiss this point, and proceed to what I proposed in *the second place.* While the doctrine of salvation by grace was the object of faith to the good man who has been taken from us, it was also *the matter of his inward experience.* Through the power of the Holy Spirit, his religious character was formed in correspondence with this Gospel truth, and under its influence.

Forty-three years ago I began to have a more particular acquaintance and correspondence with this dear brother on the subject of religion. Soon after that, we were united together, as companions and room-mates, in the study of theology. So that I had an opportunity to know all that could be known by man of his religious views and exercises. On this subject I could with pleasure discourse to you for many hours. But I must confine myself to the object proposed, namely, to show that the doctrine of salvation by grace was wrought into our brother's inward, spiritual experience, and that his religious exercises and habits manifestly corresponded with this Gospel truth, and were the counterpart of it, answering to it, as the impress on wax an-

swers to the form of the seal. I mean to say, it was so in a good measure, not *perfectly*. Gospel truth is, in itself, absolutely perfect. An entire conformity to it in our inward views and affections, would imply a more exalted state than any one attains to in the present life. Of this, who was ever more conscious than Doctor Church? The leading point in his religious experience, was a deep and continually growing conviction of his own sinfulness and ill desert. This conviction did not relate specially to his outward conduct. For this had been remarkably fair and blameless from early life. Through the whole period of his education, there was nothing in his deportment which any one could regard as inconsistent with the character of a Christian. But during his last year at Harvard College, he had strong, and sometime distressing conviction of sin. He felt that the description which the inspired writers give of the depraved heart, was all true in respect to himself. It was as certain to him as his own existance, that he was by nature a child of wrath; that he had that carnal mind which is enmity against God; and that, in his natural state, he had no spring of holy love, no element of goodness. After many serious exercises, and a long and painful struggle in his own mind, he came at length to the full persuasion, that it was not in him to renew his own heart. He was convinced by his own experience, that, whatever motives might be urged upon him, and whatever efforts he might make, he could effect nothing without the influence of the Holy Spirit; that he had destroyed himself, and that help must come from God, or he must perish. He was finally brought into a state of self-despair. He was fully persuaded that it would be just in God to leave him to perish, and that, if he was saved, it must be by God's sovereign grace. In that state of mind he took the low place before God which properly belongs to the sinner; and there he was, humbled, broken-hearted, helpless; justifying the divine law, abhorring himself, expecting no relief from his own exertions,—but still cleaving to the hope, that God would interpose and have mercy upon him. I well remember how strongly and tenderly he spoke of these things in conversation, and especially in his letters; and with what humble gratitude, he set forth the work of divine grace, after *He who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, shined in his heart, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ;* and

after he was induced, with sincerity and joy, to accept the merciful invitation of the Saviour, "*come unto me, and I will give you rest.*" Jesus gave him rest. His religious exercises at that time were uncommonly clear and decided, and gave his Christian friends very satisfactory evidence that he had passed from death to life. And yet he himself was so occupied with adoring views of the abounding grace of God, and with a sense of his own sinfulness and unworthiness, that he thought but little, comparatively, of his own exercises. His prevailing sentiment was not this: *I have now become a Christian, an heir of heaven! Oh how happy I am, and how happy I shall be forever!* It was rather this; *How great and gorious is God! How wonderful his mercy in saving them that are lost! How vile and hateful is sin! How precious the Saviour! What shall I render to the Lord for all his benefits!*

And as this was the aspect of his spiritual experience at that period, so it continued to be through life. He felt more and more, that salvation is of God. All the good in man he ascribed to divine grace; and he relied upon that grace for the whole of salvation. It was the steady, permanent habit of his mind, to exalt God and to humble himself. The greater his knowledge of the holiness and grace of God, the greater was his self-abasement. These two appeared to keep pace with each other. It was this which marked his progress in the Christian life, much as it marked the life of David Brainerd. Indeed there was, in general, a striking resemblance between the religious exercises and states of Brainerd and those of Doctor Church. In his letters, some of them written forty years ago, and some a short time before his death, he enlarged upon this precious truth, and seemed to cling to it as his only support, that *Christ is all in all*—our wisdom, our righteousness, our sanctification, and our redemption; that we must, by faith, receive of his fulness, and that in proportion as we do this, we are complete in him. Any magnifying of the power of sinful, self-ruined man for the great business of sanctification and the divine life; any thing which implied that there is any sufficiency in us for spiritual duty; any thing which tended to hinder us from walking by faith on the Son of God, or to hide from us the truth, that all our sufficiency is of God,—any thing which tended to such a result, instantly excited his apprehension. He turned away

from it, and rejected it, as contrary to his experience and spiritual taste,—contrary to his prayers, and to all the movements and impulses of his renewed nature; and, what is more than all, contrary to the spirit of the sacred writers. It cost him no long labor of reasoning to find out an error like this. He had already detected it in his own heart. He knew it to be an error, just as he knew atheism to be an error. He saw it to be the offspring of the pride and loftiness of the heart, yea, pride and loftiness itself, however concealed under an imposing form.

But I must now quit this pleasing topic, and proceed to another, not less pleasing. That doctrine of salvation by grace, which was thus wrought into the inward experience of our beloved brother, was *the spring of his pious and useful life.* It was by his full conviction and unwavering belief of this great Gospel doctrine, and by an inward affection and habit of mind corresponding with it, that he came to possess the efficacious principle of a holy and useful life.

The mistake of many, and that which occasions a constant failure in their endeavors after holiness is, that they go to work in religion, without the inward, vital *principle* of religion. They look for fruit, without planting the seed; for motion, without life; for right action, without any effectual enduring spring. Conscience is not the effectual spring of right action. Self-love is not. Fear of misery is not. Speculative knowledge of the truth is not. The pressure of external motives is not. A general, intellectual belief of the Gospel is not. Diligent attention to the external forms of religion is not. Any or all of these may exist, and may unite their forces, and may produce a visible effect upon the surface of a man's character. But they have no power to overcome the *carnal mind*, the principle of evil in the heart. We must be created anew in Christ Jesus; must be born again. The spirit of God must take up his abode in us—must impart spiritual life; and then we shall live unto God. We must have that faith which God works in the heart; and then good works will follow. When the tree is made good, the fruit will be good. When we truly believe in the doctrine of Christ crucified, and come into contact with it; then the world will be crucified to us, and we to the world.

As to our beloved brother, we have the best evidence that he had the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, which Christ represents as a well of living water, springing up to everlasting life. God, for the great love wherewith he loved him, called him, as we trust, with

a holy calling, according to his own purpose and grace, which was given him in Christ before the world was. He was turned from sin. He renounced self. He cordially submitted to the righteousness of God. In this way he came to possess an effectual, enduring spring of holy action; a real motive to obedience—a motive powerful enough to subdue all antagonist principles in the depraved heart. His love to Christ constrained him to serve Christ. His faith gave him a victory over the world. This evangelical faith, this spiritual affection, taking hold of the great Gospel truth —see how mightily it wrought in him! See what fruits it yielded! It prepared him to live and act right in all the relations and all the conditions of life. Those who enjoyed his ministerial instructions can testify what his ministry was. I might appeal to the people of his former charge in the language of Paul: "Ye are witnesses, and God also, how holily, and justly, and unblamably he behaved himself among you that believe; as ye know how he exhorted and comforted, and charged every one of you, (as a father doth his children,) that ye would walk worthy of God, who hath called you to his kingdom and glory," You are all witnesses, that he aimed faithfully and affectionately to declare unot you the whole counsel of God; that he sought not *yours*, but *you;* that he determined to know nothing among you save Jesus Christ and him crucified; and that his speech was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power; and that, if any of you fall short of heaven, it cannot be charged to the want of faithfulness in him.

Doctor Church was a minister of the Gospel more than forty years, and was known extensively in our community. And I might now appeal to ministers, and all others acquainted with him, and ask, whether his example did not show that he had been with Jesus, and had learned of him who was meek and lowly in heart. What minister or Christian did you ever know, who more uniformly exhibited the love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, and temperance, which are the fruits of the Spirit, or who had more of the likeness of Christ? Who in our day gives clearer evidence that he has been born again; that he is led by the Spirit; that he is dead to the world, and alive unto God? Who manifests a more cordial and ardent desire than he did, for the spread of the Gospel and the salvation of sinners? Who can more sincerely make his appeal to God, and say, "O how

I love thy law! It is my meditation all the day." Who has more just and scriptural views of the free and sovereign mercy of God? Who is more evidently clothed with humility? Who has more of that temper which springs from a reverential and delightful communion with God? Of whom can it be more truly said, that he walks with God, and thinks and acts in concert with the Holy Ghost? In a word, what Christian lives more as a Christian ought to live, and what minister lives more as a minister ought to live? It is, my friends, a circumstance of solemn import to us, that such a man of God has, for so many years, been amongst us; and I hope we shall not forget, that we must have another meeting with him before the judgment-seat of Christ. The Lord grant unto us, that we may find mercy of the Lord in that day.

Doctor Church was called by Divine Providence to act in many important stations, only a part of which can now be mentioned. His sound judgment, his strict integrity, his disinterested desire to do good, and his enlightened, well-directed zeal, secured the esteem and confidence of all who were acquainted with him. It was always felt to be safe to entrust the most weighty public concerns in his hands. He was an active friend of all our benevolent Societies and Institutions, and was always ready, to the extent of his ability, and beyond his ability, to contribute to their objects. Early in the operations of the American Tract Society, and for many years, he was a member of the Executive and Publishing Committee. For twenty years he was a member of the Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions, and a Trustee of Dartmouth College. For fourteen years he was a Trustee of Phillips Academy and the Theological Seminary in Andover. He was a Director and afterwards Vice-President of the New Hampshire Bible Society, and President of the New Hampshire Missionary Society. He was also Secretary of the General Association of New Hampshire from the time it was organized, A. D. 1809, till his death. In his relation to these and various other public institutions, the influence of his religious principles was always manifest. While he was warmly attached to the cause of learning and public morals, to the welfare of civil society, and to all our benevolent enterprises; he was sure never to forget *the essence of Christianity*, the doctrine of salvation by grace. With him this was the paramount object. His cordial belief of this doctrine, and the corresponding affections of his heart, had an elevating, sanctifying effect upon his

public character. His piety was a permanent, practical principle, influencing him in all his public as well as private conduct. When did he ever form plans for his own promotion or worldly interest? Who ever thought or even suspected, that he was governed by ambition? The various honors conferred upon him were unsought; and he would doubtless have been as contented without them as with them. His conversation, his prayers, and his public conduct evinced that his heart was imbued with the Spirit of Christ; that he loved the pure Gospel, and held the honor of God above all earthly objects. Those who were associated with him in the work of the ministry, and in the management of our religious institutions, knew what entire confidence they could repose in him. They had no suspicion of any selfish ends, any under current, any sinister motives; of anything, in short, but unreserved devotion to the cause of Christ. Amid the perilous commotions of the public mind, and the shipwreck of the faith of many, he stood firm as a rock. His confidence in the doctrines of the Gospel was unmoved, yea, it gained increasing power. He was "stablished, strengthened, settled." Whatever fears we might have that others would be carried about with every wind of doctrine, we had no fear respecting him. He knew the truth of the Gospel by his own experience. He had the witness in himself. He had the unction of the Holy Spirit. The influence of a man possessing such excellencies of character was everywhere felt, and everywhere invaluable. His upright and faithful labors and fervent prayers brought rich blessings upon all with whom he was connected. And all who love the prosperity of the church, and the welfare of the human family, have reason to praise the Most High God, that he raised up such a man among us; that he endued him with such inward goodness, and such qualifications for usefulness, and continued his precious life so long. And whenever our eyes are permitted to behold a man and a Gospel minister so moulded and guided by the Holy Spirit, and so like Christ as he was; we will devoutly acknowledge it as a special token of God's mercy, and will bless him for the precious gift.

Will you now bear with the preacher, while he says a word for himself on this mournful occasion? I would not cease to thank God that, after death has removed far from me the greater part of those with whom I was most intimately associated in former years, there are still continued to me so many beloved brethren, and friends, and fellow-laborers. But in vain do I look for one, with

whom I have had such an endeared, uninterrupted, and entire friendship for so many years, as I enjoyed with this excellent brother. My acquaintance with him commenced in my youth, almost half a century ago. From that time our friendship continued and increased. We labored for each other's improvement, and rejoiced in each other's prosperity; and we passed together, with sympathizing hearts, through many scenes of trial and sorrow. About twenty-five years ago, I was called to stand in this place and minister to the consolation of my afflicted brother, then suddenly bereaved of the beloved wife of his youth. The example of his peaceful submission, and his serene and cheerful spirit on that occasion, and in other times of affliction, was peculiarly delightful and profitable. I reckon it among the choicest blessings of my life that I had such a friend and brother. Indeed he was more than a brother. I looked to him as a counsellor. In how many seasons of difficulty was I cheered and assisted by his advice! How many times did his conversation and his prayers help to chase away the dark clouds which had gathered over my head! Whenever any burden pressed heavily upon me, and I felt myself ready to sink under it, a desire to see my brother Church always sprung up in my heart; and a visit from him never failed to encourage and strengthen me, and either to remove the burden, or to help me cheerfully to bear it. How lovely was his character as a man and as a minister,—so meek, so lamb-like, so Christ-like! I never knew a man whose temper was more sweet and tranquil than his, or whose heart was more free from resentment, and evil surmisings, and everything contrary to love, or whose tongue was more effectually guarded against evil-speaking, or guided more entirely by the law of kindness.

I cannot but consider it an inestimable privilege, that I was permitted to visit that good man a short time before his death. During that last happy hour which I spent with him, he conversed with perfect clearness and great freedom on a variety of most interesting subjects. But after that, as I am informed, he was able to converse no more. Do you ask how he appeared on his dying bed? He appeared just as every one who knew him thought that he would appear. I presume there was no man unacquainted with the manner of his life, who did not expect that his end would be peace. And so it was. He had,—yes, on his dying bed—he had *a penitent heart* and *a contrite spirit.* He said, with evident tenderness of feeling, that he looked upon

himself as a poor, unworthy, sinful man. But he was filled with admiration at the wonderful goodness of God. He felt then, as he had so long felt before, that he depended for salvation on God's sovereign grace;—he felt this as really as he did when he first called upon the almighty Saviour for the life of his soul. In that last scene his faith rested directly on its great object. His peace, and hope, and joy were derived, not from what he saw in himself,—though he had satisfactory evidence of his piety, —but from what he saw in *Christ*,—his infinite love, his readiness to save, his inexhaustible fullness. He gave thanks to God that he had been directed of late, more than formerly, to meditate on the glory of Christ. He spoke of the precious books he had read within the last year or two, referring particularly to Owen on the Glory of Christ, Stevenson on the Offices of Christ, Good's Better Covenant, and President Dickinson's Letters. He repeatedly expressed a strong desire that ministers, and those who are preparing for the ministry, might know more of the preciousness of Christ, and might more fully declare his unsearchable riches to others. He wanted Christ to be more honored. He said, in a very solemn, impressive manner, that he had fears there were some ministers who had never been born again, and were destitute of the spirit of religion. And he wished all ministers to feel that they constantly needed the grace of Christ. He expressed a lively interest in the welfare of our Theological Seminary, and said he should be glad, if it might be the will of God, to visit it once more. He said, too, there were several things he had designed to do for the cause of Christ; but he was willing to leave it with God to determine whether he should live to do them or not. It was indeed a happy thing to be near such a servant of Christ, when he was so near to heaven. And now, whatever may be my lot in earthly things, the Lord grant unto me that I may live as that dear brother lived, and die as he died!

The bereaved children will, I trust, mingle gratitude and joy with their sorrows. Render hearty thanks to God that he manifested such kindness and grace towards your honored and beloved father, and impressed upon him so visibly the image of the meek and lowly Jesus. Thank God, not that your father was a *minister*, but that he was *such* a minister; and that you have for so long a time enjoyed his counsels, his example, and his prayers. These are all treasured up in your minds; —a rich inheritance, far better than any earthly possession.

You have also that blessed volume which your father read and studied for so many years with increasing interest. You have, too, the writings of Scott, and Edwards, and Owen, and other excellent authors, which were so congenial to his taste, and so helpful to him in the divine life. They will now be dearer to you than ever before. I know, in some measure, what must have been the worth of such a father to you, and how great your present loss. I know how solitary that beloved home will be to you, where neither father nor mother can any more be found; and what a feeling of loneliness and sadness will steal into your minds after these funeral services are past. You will indeed have many sympathizing friends to comfort you; but your comfort must come chiefly from a heavenly source. Look, then, to your God, and the God of your father. His promises are precious. His grace will be sufficient for you. Through the aids of his Spirit cultivate that sweet serenity of mind, that peaceful submission, that pious contentment and cheerfulness, and that diligent attention to all the branches of duty, which you have seen exemplified in your honored father. Remember that it is an act of love for the Lord Jesus to call his servants home, that they may be with him where he is. Your father was very happy here below; yes, one of the happiest men I ever knew. He had a peculiar delight in the good things of the present life. And he had an uncommon degree of joy in God. But if he was peaceful and happy in this world, so full of sin and suffering, and so far from God; how exquisite must his happiness be in the presence of Him whom his soul loved. Oh! what joy swells his heart, to see Jesus face to face, to be wholly freed from sin, and to be filled with all the fulness of God! Let your thoughts dwell delightfully on that blessed world, where God is collecting together all that is pure, and excellent, and happy in the universe. May he be graciously near to you, to comfort your sorrowful hearts, and to give you a foretaste of celestial joy; so that you may say, even under this stroke of his hand, *the Lord is good; his mercy endureth for ever.*

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THE PROSPECTS OF CHRISTIANITY.

"*I saw in the night visions, and behold one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before him. And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages should serve him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed.*"—Daniel vii. 13, 14.

It is not my present purpose to examine, nor even to introduce those Scriptures which predict the millennial reign of Christ. Of these, let the text suffice. My object is rather to show, from actual events passed and passing, that there are unequivocal indications of a rapidly advancing period, when Christ will reign over all the world, in a kingdom of righteousness which will not pass away.

The vast and seemingly insurmountable obstacles to be overcome in securing the universal reign of Christ, are often very trying to faith; but what is most of all disheartening to the christian philanthropist, is the fact that the nations which first and subsequently received christianity, have since degenerated into the darkness and corruptions of heathenism—giving rise to the appalling suspicion, that what we are now doing will in like manner be undone; that all impressions made by christianity are, like those made upon the sands of the sea shore, to be effaced by the successive waves of a few generations; and that every attempt to establish a universal and permanent reign of Christianity over the world, must be as abortive as an attempt to alter the course of

nature itself, which has ever indicated rise and fall, revolution and change, as pertaining to the law of all human events.

But careful attention to the subject, with a cautious judgment, may relieve our minds of this painful prognostic. It should be considered that the christian religion never perished from the souls that actually received it. Having cheered them through life, it received them at death to everlasting glory. But the means of transmitting and perpetuating it, now so richly enjoyed and increasing, were in the earlier ages mostly wanting. The channels through which such a religion as Christianity are to be made to descend from generation to generation, are general knowledge, arts and sciences, literature, civil government, domestic institutions, and the respect and sympathy of a people for the views and institutions of their fathers.

Since the advent of Christ, there have been four general and special efforts to extend his religion over the world—the first in the time of the Apostles, the second in the time of Constantine, the third in the time of the Reformers, the fourth in our own time. But the nature and circumstances of the first three efforts were essentially different from those which characterize the last and present one.

Look first at the apostolic age. A few men were very learned in their way, but the great mass of the people were in extreme ignorance; nor were there any favorable means of diffusing knowledge among them. There was no press to multiply books; —the price of a Bible was a fortune. Few were taught to read, and fewer still could afford to own a book. The general intelligence of the people being very meager, their knowledge of religion must have been that of mere babes. How then could christianity become deeply and vitally incorporated with the minds and institutions of the age? How could any other impression of it to be made upon them, than such as two or three passing generations could easily efface? Traditions would remain, but, considering the tendencies of depraved minds to corrupt truth, how soon would they naturally run into all the vagaries of heathenism? Most of the modern arts were then unknown, and science, as then taught, was almost wholly false. Natural philosophy, intellectual and moral philosophy, geography, astronomy, anatomy, and physiology, which christianity has now extensively pervaded and consecrated to Christ, were then in such a state that no true religion could safely incorporate with them. Had christianity embraced science as it was in apostolic times, she must have become so allied to falsehood as to have defeated herself. The talents and learning of the age were of course affianced to the science of the age, and this was so repugnant to

christianity, that he who would embrace the one must renounce the other. Hence the most learned apostle instructs a young disciple to *"avoid profane and vain babblings and oppositions of science falsely so called, which some professing have erred concerning the faith."*

The *literature* of the apostolic age was also lost to christianity. Greece had already passed her zenith, and Rome was then in her highest literary glory. It was not for the most erudite and polished minds of the proudest and most learned of our schools to abandon their long-cherished associations in a day, and grace their gilded pages with thoughts and imagery borrowed from the fishermen of Galilee. Before a new religion can become incorporated with the literature of a great and learned nation, it must hold dominion over the public mind long enough to mould it, and long enough for the distinguished scholars to adopt and publish and sing it. But as christianity failed to secure a hold upon the public mind long enough for this to be done, the literature of two most learned and elegant schools the world ever furnished, with all its beauty, and eloquence, and fascination, and power, was left to give laws to the literary world for succeeding ages, without the least degree of christian sanctification, or scarcely even a single allusion to the facts and sentiments of the Gospel.

For a similar reason christianity failed to enter into the constitution of civil government. This, too, is the work of time, nor can it indeed ever be accomplished in kingly and aristocratic governments, but by the favor of such as do homage to literature, science, taste, and public sentiment. The time is predicted when kings will be nursing fathers to the church, but it was far otherwise in the first age of christianity. Not many mighty, not many noble, are called.

Domestic institutions, and the attachments of the people to ancestral views and customs, so powerful to *retain* long cherished religion, are equally powerful to resist a new one. These were but very partially changed by christianity of the first age, so short and limited was its operation.

Thus we see, that while christianity in the hands of the apostles did undoubtedly regenerate multitudes of souls and conduct them to heaven, its impressions upon the constitution of society and all those causes which are most permanent in human affairs, were slight and transient. It is not strange that they vanished away. That primitive christianity *might have* retained and augmented its power over the earth till this hour, had the world been less wicked, or christians more faithful, is not denied. But

taking men and things as they are, it was not to be expected. Every sound and far-reaching judgment would have anticipated a reverse. The apostles well knew and predicted it. While with burning spirits and tireless hands they labored to build up the Redeemer's kingdom, they yet knew and taught that there was to be a great falling away—that the man of sin was to be revealed—and that the glory of Jesus was to immerge into a deep and prolonged eclipse, before it would burst forth in the full-orbed and everlasting brightness of millennial day. Most of the disadvantages which attended christianity under the apostles, attended it also under Constantine. Moreover, the efforts of that Emperor in favor of christianity were of a worldly nature, and contemplated a worldly end. The pure light of the Gospel having mostly faded out from the nations, and science, literature, civil government, and established prejudices being strongly set against it, the united dominions of Mohammedanism, Popery, and Paganism secured large ascendency, under which multitudes of the people long sat in rayless darkness. At first view, the christian religion seems to have made little or no progress during that dreary night which preceded the reformation.

The reformation under Luther and his coadjuters, glorious as it was, was yet more a political than a religious event. It was rather a *preparing of the way* of the Lord, than a work of experimental religion in the hearts of men. The impression that a large portion of the people of the revolutionized states were spiritually born of God, and that religion has since *declined* there, is a false impression. A few individuals were truly enlightened and spiritually renewed, but, with the great mass of the people, the reformation was little else than the putting off of one form of religion for another, from merely political motives, and with little knowledge of the difference.

It seems to be a law of the universe, that while those physical causes which desolate and destroy may accomplish their work suddenly, healing moral causes operate gradually. Hence the Gospel is compared to leaven hid in three measures of meal, which by degrees leavens the whole lump; and to the mustard seed, which by a slow and sure process becomes "the greatest among herbs. An earthquake may rend the earth and desolate a continent in a moment. An Alexander or a Buonaparte may demolish thrones, sweep away the landmarks of nations, and revolutionize kingdoms in a few months. But to recover the world from the bondage of Satan to the spiritual reign of Christ, is the laborious work of ages. Let us then briefly notice the progress of christianity, and observe her sure and stately march, even through external defeats and reverses, towards her predicted universal dominion.

In her first centuries she suffered more from the condition of the arts, science, literature, and domestic institutions, than from the hand of persecution. Under Constantine she suffered also from the caresses of the world. She became secularized, and lost her power over the conscience. Mental torpor and moral death naturally followed, and a long dark night settled down upon the nations. Avarice and lust of power and indulgence ascended the ecclesiastical throne, and the papal hierarchy held in iron bondage the intellect, the conscience, the wealth, of nearly the whole civilized world. But the day of redemption at length came, and God raised up a constellation of minds adequate to the exigency. From the dusty archives of monastery Luther recovered the long-lost word of God, and by unfolding its contents produced a convulsion that shook the papal throne to its base. Immediately thereupon mind awoke, as if kindled by fires from heaven. A new order of intellect sprang into being. But even the dark ages, commencing with the fall of Rome, and terminating with the fall of Constantinople—a period of a thousand years, in which intellect, genius, enterprise, courage, refinement, and all correct moral sentiments and philanthrophy, seem to have nearly forsaken the earth, and the angel of the covenant to have been about to take his everlasting flight—are imprinted with the footsteps of a benign providence, tending towards the ultimateand triumphant reign of truth and righteousness. Causes latent, but effective, were operating to usher in a new and splendid era. And when the set time was fully come, minds of every mould were cast by God, as brilliant and powerful as ever honored humanity, to introduce the present and approaching ages, of intellectual and moral illumination. Already has christianity fought her battles with infidelity in its greatest strength, and in her own greatest weakness. Her progress is now steadily and surely onward. Whatever she gains, she retains.

Glance we now for a moment at some of the causes which, since the resurrection of the world from the dark ages, have been coming rapidly into existence to aid the progress and power of the Gospel over the human race. The invention of paper, of printing, of the telescope, of the mariner's compass, and the discovery of the sphericity of the earth, are revolutionizing the whole world and placing it in a position favorable to the light of heaven. They are opening new kingdoms of intellectual wealth, and bringing all the minds of the human family together. Every man upon the earth is becoming near neighbour to every other man. Christianity may hence indefinitely augment and universally extend her instruments of moral power. Once an important thought conceived in the closet could find its way only to a very few minds, by written manuscripts and tardy conveyances; now, by means of the press and modern facilities for travelling, it may rapidly multiply itself—one may become

a million in a day—and fly as on the wings of lightning to all the families of the globe. If christianity is divine, we should expect that all advances in sound science would tend to confirm and extend it. Mohammedanism, paganism, and every species of false religion, flee in disgrace from the presence of true science. But christianity invokes it. The religion of the Bible was disclosed in the infancy of the world, and of course in the infancy of science and yet all the subsequent extensive researches of science have not been able to detect in it a single false promise or doctrine. The sciences of mineralogy, geology, natural history, chemistry, and astronomy, as learned by inductive demonstration, have silenced the arguments of infidels from these sciences incorrectlly taught, and have proved incontestibly that the God of nature and the God of christianity are the same God. Infidelity has heretofore climbed into the heavens and dug into the earth, to seek for arguments; she has attempted to make the stars above and the storms beneath testify against Moses and against Christ. She has also, with the same intent, searched the dark and musty rolls of antiquity, and enjoyed her ephemeral triumph. Subsequent science and research are speaking more and more harmoniously with the language of the Bible. Improvement in modes of investigating moral subjects, and of communicating thought, are also contributing to extend the christian religion. The sure inductive process of arriving at truth is becoming universal; the laws and powers of the human mind are becoming better understood; the meaning of the Gospel and its adaptation to the wants of men are increasingly apparent; the nature and principles of righteous moral government are more fully disclosing their light and strength; a deeper, more rational, and more operative conviction of the truth and value of the Bible, are the result.

The tendencies of civil government to the popular and elective form are conspiring to the same end. The decree has gone forth, *The nations must be free!* The light of liberty is breaking in upon them, and no human powers can quench the glorious orb that is ascending the heavens. The intellectual and moral energies of all classes are thus elicited, and the friends of Christ the better enabled to do for his cause whatsoever their hand findeth. The progress of peace is also to be considered in the same connection. The modern invention of gunpowder, in connection with other improvements in the science and arts of war, are tending to advance christianity by banishing wars from the earth. For just in the degree that you reduce a game of hazard to certainty, you spoil the game. War is the game of madmen, played at the price of the blood of nations; and it is the uncertainty attending the game that supports it. Remove this, by enabling contending parties to calculate their relative forces, and predict the results of action, and you rob victories of their glory, military prowess of its valor, and war of *its*

intoxicating charm. Under the combined influence of science, arts, and christianity, the world is ceasing to be swayed by brute force; the sceptre is passing over from the empire of matter to that of mind. The thunder of war and the groans of slaughtered millions will soon cease to settle disputes between nations. The sword will drop from the hand of the warrior; mind and moral worth will ascend the throne of power. That little instrument, *the pen*, will govern the world. "*In his days shall the righteous flourish, and abundance of peace, so long as the moon endureth.*"

So much for providential preparation. Advance now and see what *christianity has actually achieved.* Having been so miserably represented, the reformation was a resurrection of mind to oppose as well as to favor. Some of her adversaries, such especially as Herbert, Hume, Shaftsbury, Bollingbroke, Voltaire, and Rousseau, were men of extensive learning, keen pointed wit, and vigorous understandings. They pushed their researches and speculations to the farthest. The more recent productions of Pain, Volney, Taylor, and others, can have no influence but with minds of the lower order. When men must needs resort to scurrility and appeals to wicked passions to sustain their cause, it is evident that both they and their cause are fast sinking. The attacks of the learned infidels of the last century summoned the intellect of christendom to its most vigorous efforts. A galaxy of the keenest, profoundest, most learned and brilliant minds ever given to our world, instantly appeared. Every infidel position was thoroughly examined and overthrown, every infidel argument completely answered, and the truth of christianity incontestably demonstrated. When infidelity had fastened its deadly grasp on the French nation, and had begun also to invade the island of Britain; when it was essaying to walk with haughty and desolating strides across continental Europe and America; then it was that Voltaire, waxing bold in the pride of his spirit, proclaimed, "Jesus of Nazareth pretended that with twelve apostles he could establish a religion for the world and for ever, but I will let him know that I can demolish it in an age." And how well did he sustain his promise? In less than twenty years from the time he uttered it, he expired in the horrors of awakened remorse; the nation that embraced his infidelity was ingulfed in ruin; a mighty earthquake shook the world, and the powers of darkness fell prostrate; extensive revivals of religion commenced in both continents; jubilee was proclaimed in Christendom, and ten thousand thousand voices shouted, "*Hosannah to the Son of David!*" Well might the prophet in blest vision exclaim, "*No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper, and every tongue that shall rise against thee in judgment thou shalt condemn. This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord, and their righteousness is of me, saith the Lord.*" When his set time to favor Zion is come, all opposition is but as a pebble before the ponderous wheels of his majestic chariot.

In the order of nature, an intellectual struggle, by which error is defeated and truth established, precedes a work of experimental piety. The great intellectual battles of christianity having been successfully fought, the career of spiritual religion has been steadily advancing to this hour. All Europe is beginning to feel the holy leaven. In France, where, forty years ago, there were scarcely half a dozen protestant churches, there are now more than two hundred scattered over the kingdom in every direction. Switzerland is experiencing newness of life in all her cantons. Italy has recently received several protestant ministers, and the cause of Christ is there assuming a new character and promise. Germany is imbibing evangelical sentiments by a slow but sure process. Belgium is enjoying the ministrations of some of the most faithful and enlightened servants of Christ. Sweden, Denmark, Norway, and Prussia, are becoming evangelical; and the great empire of Russia is beginning to receive the Gospel. In the meantime Britain and the United States, the great depositories and fountains of christian influence, are experiencing repeated and increasing refreshings from the presence of the Lord and the glory of his power. In connection with all this, contemplate the Bible, Tract, and Education Societies, Sabbath-schools, domestic missions, and the great and crowning cause of missions to the unevangelized, springing into being almost simultaneously in every christian country and denomination, sustained by the sympathies, prayers, and contributions of all who love Christ, and contemplating nothing less than the conversion of the whole world to God. Is this an idle dream of enthusiasts? To say nothing of what has been accomplished by the Danes in India, and by the Moravians and other denominations in Greenland, Africa, and America, let us see what has been accomplished in our own day and under our own eyes An army of a thousand ordained missionaries, besides a corresponding number of females, has been educated, disciplined, equipped, and sent forth to all parts of the world—to West Africa, South Africa, the regions adjacent to the Inland Seas, China, Burmah, or India beyond the Ganges, the Indian Archipelago, Australasia and Polynesia, West Indies, the North American Indians, Greenland, and Labrador. Unaided by royal or state patronage, this host of the Lord has been sent forth and is sustained in service, with all their expensive means and instruments of labor, by the voluntary offerings of the christian public. Does not this prove that the heart and the hand of christendom are moved for the regeneration of the world? And now ask we for the *fruits?* There have been already more than a hundred thousand hopeful conversions, or more than a hundred to an ordained missionary. This, however, is but the beginning. To estimate the entire fruit of missionary labors, we must look at the numerous and strange tongues reduced to written languages, the numerous languages into which the Bible has been translated, the thousands of schools and hundreds of thousands of heathen children

under christian instruction, the many valuable books of science translated and beginning to enlighten pagan mind, the millions of Bibles and of tracts circulated, and the deep and sure foundations laid for permanent christian and civil institutions.

In great masses incipient movements are gradual; hence in the larger nations the fruits of missions are as yet scarcely apparent. If you would see their more full development, cast your eye over the Sandwich and South Sea Islands. But a few years since the darkest heathenism held entire dominion over them. They had no written language, not even the simplest elements of education. They were enslaved to the most besotting superstitions and disgusting vices. Already have their barbarous tongues been reduced to written languages, into which the Bible and other valuable books have been translated; schools of elementary instruction have been extensively established, and all classes and ages taught to read; idolatry has been renounced; the Sabbath sanctified, multitudes of souls converted; churches organized; temples of christian worship erected; the Gospel preached to large and attentive audiences; and if they have not yet attained to all the refined embellishments of older countries, they have already taken no mean place among civilized and christian nations. If we turn to Ceylon, we find some sixty thousand children under a course of christian education; a higher school or college in successful operation; repeated revivals of religion; churches planted and prospering; nothing wanted but increased and prolonged efforts. On the continent of Asia, in the populous regions of the Mediterranean, in Southern Africa, in the West Indies, in the savage portions of North America, the same operations are in various stages of progress. The sun in his daily walks shines at no moment but on some missionary station. Already does the light of the Gospel, by missionary labors, constitute an unbroken luminous zone, belting the entire globe. And this, be it remembered, by our own generation. But the beginning of a great and good reform must be comparatively slow. It accelerates its movement as it advances. Who then can reasonably doubt, that, if the causes for evangelizing the world shall go on increasing in the ratio of the last forty years, the time is at hand when the glorious Gospel of God our Saviour will be received and honored among all the nations and tribes of the earth. The struggle must proportionably arduous, the toil severe, the sacrifice great, but the result is sure. The vision of the burning prophet, as beautifully paraphrased by Cowper, will be realized:

> One song employs all nations, and all cry,
> Worthy the Lamb, for he was slain for us!
> The dwellers in the vales and on the rocks
> Shout to each other, and the mountain tops
> From distant mountains catch the flying joy;
> Till, nation after nation taught the strain,
> Earth rolls the rapturous hosannah round.

We come now to the last and most interesting inquiry, what assurance have we that the nations evangelized by modern missions will not, as in the first centuries, decline again into heathenism? Even many christians have supposed that they will; and not a few learned commentators have adopted an exposition of the prophecies, which gives to Satan yet a thousand years of dark dominion, after all nations shall have been won to Christ. But other commentators maintain that the thousand years of Satan's dominion is already past, and the appalling conjecture that all which is now built up is to be again destroyed, is giving place to more rational and cheering prospects. But it is not my present purpose to expound the Scriptures. I shall appeal only to *facts* as evidence that what is now gained to Christ will never be lost. And here we shall find that the same reasons which we have for believing that Great Britain and the United States will never become heathen nor Mohammedan nations, we have also for believing that the nations now in the process of evangelization will never relapse to their previous state. The same means which we have already considered as favorable to *extend* christianity, are equally effectual to *perpetuate* it. Let us briefly recur to them in this connection.

In the first place, christianity will retain her hold upon the nations now and hereafter evangelized, through the *prevalence of religious knowledge among the people.* In the earlier ages of christianity, when there was no press, when the people were without books, and without means of instruction but by oral communication, if corruptions entered the schools and infected the teachers, there were no means of arresting them. That great conservative power, *the knowledge of the people,* was wanting. But now, the press, in the hands of the missionaries, is diffusing religious knowledge among all classes. The Bible is placed in the hands of all, and they are taught to read it. The people of every rank and condition are thus introduced directly to the source of truth. And hence, if any theological schools or public teachers should ever rudely forsake the truth, and cherish views tending to heathenism, the sentiment of the great people, constantly enlightened by their contact with the Bible, will reject them and substitute others. Let any college or theological school in this country or in Britain adopt sentiments grossly at variance with the Bible, and it must soon pay the forfeiture of losing public confidence, and sinking into annihilation. The same will be the case in every nation that becomes thoroughly enlightened with the word of God.

Secondly. *The prevalence of the arts and sciences* will also contribute to perpetuate christianity. All those arts which elevate, dignify, and refine humanity, and all those sciences which impart correct and enlarged views of the laws and operations of nature, follow in the bright track of christian missions. Would it ever

be possible to induce the people of Britain, or of the United States, to throw away the arts of civilized life, and return to the savage and heathen state of their early ancestors? Or would it be possible, in the nation where Newton has demonstrated the laws and movements of the heavenly bodies, and where thousands of minds are thoroughly taught the sciences of nature, and where all have proved their truth with their own eyes, and have learned to act upon them, ever to induce the people to reject the only religion which harmonizes them, and to embrace one at variance with them? Men may be induced to do very strange and foolish things, but never such a thing as this. The New England farmer consults his Almanac, a little book in every family, almost as surely as the Bible, and he finds that science has predicted the day, the hour, the minute, the second of a solar eclipse, and at the predicted time his own eyes verify the calculation. He thus knows of a certainty that the science must be true. Can he then ever be induced to embrace a religion which declares this science to be false? Will he ever give credence to the absurd doctrines and blind superstitions of the heathen respecting this phenomenon? Never; nor his children, nor his children's children, to the end of time. The same is true respecting *all* the inductive and exact sciences. They all make irreconcilable war with every other religion but christianity. Wherever these prevail, all other religions but the christian must fall; this and this only, can and must stand. And yet all these sciences are now in the progress of being taught to the heathen nations.

Thirdly. Christianity will perpetuate her dominion by means of her *sanctified literature*. When a religion has become incorporated with the standing literature of a nation, even if it be a false religion, it is the work of ages to exterminate it. Indeed, nothing but the most invincible demonstration of its falsity, or the destruction of the nation itself, will ever displace it from the associations and sympathies of the people. Now, English literature has already become deeply imbued with the christian religion. It has its Miltons, its Youngs, its Cowpers, its Newtons, its Wattses, its Thompsons, its Pollocks, and its hundreds of other poets of the dead and the living, to sing the sweet and sublime raptures of christianity in immortal verse. It has also its numerous prose writers of the highest order, who have set forth the doctrines and precepts of christianity with all the fascination and power and permanency of the most finished and charming rhetoric. So long as the English language endures, and there lives in Britain and America a generation to appreciate the beauties of literature, the christian religion must, in these nations be read, and taught, and sung. Will the day ever shine when a professed scholar of English descent will not blush to own that

he never read Milton nor Cowper? Consider now that modern missions are fast introducing christian literature among the heathen, and that the earliest and strongest associations of the newly evangelized nations are to be with a literature purely christian. This will be true of all excepting some in the East, who are conversant with an ancient pagan literature. With such, science must go in advance of literature, to demonstrate the absurdities of their religion; then will their first associations with scientific truth and christianity be also with the literature of christianity; and it may be reasonably presumed that their contempt of their former literature will be in proportion to the absurdities and vices to which it is allied. One thing is certain, of all literature repugnant to the christian religion the death warrant is already written. Its doom is sealed. He who would write for immortality must keep clear of infidelity; he must beware how he even so much as *occasionally* dips his pen in Satan's ink-horn. Correct sentiment and a chastened public taste will not tolerate it. Voltaire and Byron were splendid intellects richly furnished, and there is but one reason why they are not at this moment in every gentleman's family library by the side of Addison and Milton. As the world advances in the lofty principles and pure virtues of christianity, all infidel writings will fall more and more into neglect, until they at last pass into utter oblivion.

Fourthly. Christianity will also make *institutions of civil government* subservient to the perpetuity of her dominion. I speak not of that forced alliance of church and state, by which the one is compelled to support the other. This is never to be desired. I refer only to a recognition of the truths of religion by civil governments, as the foundation of their laws and sanctions. As fast as the rude nations become christianized, civil governments are established over them upon christian principles. This has already been done in the Sandwich and South Sea Islands. By introducing into pagan nations its recognitions of human right, and its principles of human accountability, as the true support and sanction of governments, christianity ultimately becomes the foundation, and by degrees enters into the entire structure of all civil institutions. When it has thus taken root at the bottom of a nation, and shot its branches upward through all the departments of the social system, it can be removed only by the destruction of the nation itself. Every discerning politician well knows that christianity could not be severed from the civil institutions of Britain, or of the United States, but by the utter demolition of the government of which it is the support.

Fifthly. *The domestic constitution* is another important means by which the dominion of christianity will be made perpetual.

The blessings of the conjugal, parental, filial, and fraternal relations, as instituted and sustained by christianity, are to all who enjoy them of so superior and absorbing interest, that if there were nothing else to bind the people of a christian nation to their religion, these would seem to be sufficient. Now, as fast as christianity is introduced among the heathen, the blessings of its domestic institutions begin to be realized; hence within a single generation it is thus to become identified with all their sweetest associations and most hallowed affections. Mr. Richards, missionary from the Sandwich Islands, informed us that the aged men and women there, who had sacrificed their infant offspring before missionaries went among them, when they looked around and beheld the happy families springing up under the institutions of christianity, burst forth with inconsolable anguish, saying to the missionaries, "Why did you not come sooner, that we too might have enjoyed the same blessings?"

Sixthly. *The deep sentiment of respect and sympathy cherished by men towards the views and institutions of their fathers*, is a very effective means of perpetuating christianity. This operates as a mighty obstacle to its *introduction* into pagan nations. Indeed, nothing but the most convincing demonstration, attended with the grace of God, can avail to overcome this obstacle, even to displace a false for a true religion. But if it is mighty to resist the introduction of christianity, it will be more mighty to *retain* it when it is introduced; for in the one case it has terror, and in the other truth on its side, and other things being equal, the side of truth is always the side of prevailing strength.

Few chords are stronger than those of sympathy and affection, which bind a posterity to the religion of their ancestors. The Jews, the Mohammedans, the Chinese, and the Hindoos, all furnish striking illustrations of this truth. Sickness, trials, age, approaching death, events with which the world ever abounds, call to mind the fathers and the mothers, awaken all the tender emotions towards them, and beget strong desires to die in the same faith with them, and in prospects of the same eternal inheritance. Exceptions there are, strange and monstrous creatures, who seem dead to such emotions, but they *are* exceptions. The great mass of the people, in every country, cling with desperate attachment to the religion of their ancestors. Nor was it ever known that a people, uncompelled, renounced their ancestral religion for any other excepting the christian. And never did it come to pass, in a single instance, that a christian community deliberately renounced its religion for paganism. In the early ages the posterity of christian communities gradually slid into various corruptions of christianity, through causes which now, as we have seen, no longer exist. No nation will ever consent to abandon the religion or their ancestors, unless

it is proved to be false; and as this can never be proved of christianity, no nation that now enjoys or shall hereafter enjoy it, will ever renounce it. There may be eccentric individuals, wandering stars, but the great body of the people will hold to it with an unclenching grasp. The efforts of the French leaders to divorce their nation from it, although it was with them so corrupted as to be little better than paganism, were spasmodic and abortive; the people soon returned to it, and held it as tenaciously as ever. Were the rulers of this land to abjure christianity, and all the people to come under a resistless necessity to embrace atheism, or paganism, or Mohammedanism, or Deism, or even Romanism, for twenty years no sooner would this term expire than they would leap from their chains and re-embrace their religion with all the vigor of their first attachment. It is with unregenerate men as with unfilial children, who disobey and abuse their parents, but are yet unwilling to part with them.

Such are among the natural grounds of our belief that CHRISTIANITY WILL PREVAIL OVER THE WORLD, AND BE PERPETUAL. This ground consists of no airy speculations, or fanatical conceit, but incontestible facts and demonstrations. If the constitution and course of nature do not lie, if the known laws of the human mind do not prove false, if the power of truth and goodness to enlighten and bless does not utterly fail, there are causes in operation to extend and perpetuate the benign reign of Christ over all the human race. The vision of the prophet is to be fully realized—"*And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages should serve him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed.*"

The various other prophecies respecting the universal and abiding reign of Christ over the earth, as well as the promises of God to pour out his Spirit without measure, and bless all people with his renewing grace, I leave untouched. There also are sources of assurance on which the believer firmly relies, while the preceding considerations are all that remain to "the fearful and unbelieving." However well adapted the natural means of extending and perpetuating the christian religion over the world, we doubt not that the desperate and universal depravity of our race would counteract them but for the promised grace of the Holy Spirit; yet true believers in the one being equally assured of the other, they, as well as those who are in doubt of both, are thus left to the entire force of the independent argument. To believers, therefore, as well as to unbelievers, these considerations are important, as serving to illustrate the meaning and force of prophecy, and to encourage faith. Let us thus learn to pray, to labor, to contribute, for the kingdom of Christ, with the inspiring assurance that it is

certainly advancing, is near, is even upon us. Yes, the golden beams of millennial day already brighten the horizon; ours is the privilege to hasten on their noontide flood of glory. Let our hearts never faint, nor our hands grow weary. When we hear of the unexpected termination of useful lives in the christian service, of defeats, disappointments, disasters; of the apparent triumphs of the adversary; let us not be surprised with any amazement. These are no new nor strange events. The Lord has ever overruled them for the ultimate advancement of his kingdom, and so will he ever do, till his last foe is subdued, and his undisputed reign embraces the whole world.

We are also counselled in what light to regard all the important *secular* interests and pursuits of this wonderful age in which we live—all the sciences, arts, discoveries, inventions, all improvements in civil governments and in the domestic and social state of mankind. To the cause of general education and the universal diffusion of knowledge we here assign the highest importance. All these are to be servants of Christ—they are to hasten the coming, swell the triumphs, and heighten the joys of his kingdom. The science that scales the heavens, explores the earth and seas, and searches out the deeper and richer treasures of the human mind; the arts that construct and freight our ships, make highways upon the ocean, quicken and extend commerce, course the earth in every direction with fire-sped cars, bring the human family together as it were around the same social board, and the same holy alter; all the discoveries and inventions which display the gifts of nature and providence, and teach men how to use them; all possible improvements in the political, civil, and social condition of mankind—we may hail with gladness and give our hearts and hands to encourage, as means ordained by God to extend and perpetuate the dominion of Christ over the earth. Let us then expand our thoughts, take large and liberal views, do all in our power to improve the world in every particular, with singleness of eye to the glory of God, and so the sooner will Christ reign in triumph, and the more glorious and happy will be his kingdom.

And finally, we are hence furnished with some of the most stirring motives to give our heart to Christ, and enter immediately into his service. Especially to young men in a course of training for public service, and indeed to the whole rising generation, what an opportunity is afforded to "seek for glory, and honor and immortality." What a privilege, in a world where every thing else is so soon to perish, to have presented to your choice an object like this, a kingdom of boundless riches, and transcendent joys, so near, so certain, and never to pass away! Submit yourselves to God, become the regenerate and faithful subjects of this kingdom, and IT IS ALL YOURS. Its growing conquests and triumphs, its long

ages of properous reign over the earth, the joys and praises of saints below and the redeemed above, the happiness of sympathising and gladdened angels, yea, even the infinite and amazing blessedness of God and the Lamb, are all yours to possess and to enjoy for ever! All these are to belong to the great entertainment of the marriage supper of the Lamb, when the bride hath made herself ready. Of all the redeemed and sanctified millions on earth and before the throne of God, and of all the angels of light, it shall be yours to say "*These are my brethren; their joys are mine.*" Of Jehovah Almighty, and Christ the King of saints you may say, "*This is my God, and all the majesty and glory of his infinite being will redound to the joy of my heart for ever.*" And inasmuch as death occasions no interruption of the vision and sympathies of disembodied spirits, what exultations may thrill your hearts, and sweep the chords of your golden lyres, as you look down from the skies with Abraham, and Daniel, and Isaiah, and Paul, and all who have espoused the cause, and lived for the glory of Christ below, to behold the fruit of your labors, the answer of your prayers, the desire of your hearts, in the long and bright ages of millennial righteousness and joy. And then to think also of the "far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory" reserved for you in heaven, —say, *is not all this too much to lose?* Will you consent to have no part nor lot in this great inheritance? From such a kingdom and such a portion as this, will you turn away to everlasting exile, poverty, and despair? The great price is now put in your hand, the great privilege is offered you; but if refused, will soon be withdrawn. It is the unchanging wisdom of God not to allow *such* an offer to be long trifled with. Refuse it you may, to your eternal undoing, but myriads of others will accept. The great King will say to his swift messengers, "*Go out quickly into the highways and hedges and compel them to come in; but as for those that were bidden they shall not taste of my supper.*"

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BY NATHAN S. S. BEMAN.

TROY.

THE GOSPEL ADAPTED TO THE WANTS OF THE WORLD.

"*His name shall endure for ever: his name shall be continued as long as the sun: and men shall be blessed in him: all nations shall call him blessed.*"—Psalm 72 : 17.

This divine song has a primary reference to the kingdom of Solomon, the son of David—but was intended, at the same time, to typify the kingdom of Jesus Christ, David's more exalted Son. With this single explanatory remark, I would leave the general structure of the Psalm, and the exposition of its various parts, to your own reflections. The passage to which I particularly invite your attention, asserts the extent and duration of the reign of Jesus Christ upon the earth; and presents a glowing picture of its prosperity and happiness. In relation to its extent, it is to embrace "all nations," and in duration, it "shall be continued as long as the sun." In other words, the kingdom of Jesus Christ—the Gospel kingdom—shall embrace all the nations of the earth, and endure, with undiminished power and glory, while the world itself shall stand. It is clearly asserted, too, that the happiness of the human family will be greatly increased under the predicted reign of the Son of God. "Men shall be blessed in him: all nations shall call him blessed."

Nothing can be more obvious than that this prediction asserts, that the religion of the Gospel will hereafter become, and will continue to be, the prevailing religion of our world. This fact is fully settled in the Bible. It was, for ages, the grand theme of the Old

Testament prophets—and the truths which they committed, in strains of exalted poetry, to the sacred lyre, have been taken up and expounded with such clearness by their New Testament successors—by the Son of God and his apostles—that not a shadow of a doubt can rest upon their import. The same fact, that is, that christianity will become the religion of the world, might be inferred, with equal certainty, from the admission, that God is its Author, or that the Bible contains a revelation from heaven.

But waving these considerations, there is another important truth intimately associated with the universal spread of the Gospel, to which I would invite your attention on the present occasion. The truth to which I refer is this: that the religion of the Bible is adapted, in its nature, to become the exclusive religion of our world. This sentiment, it is apprehended, is more than intimated in the text. Jesus Christ, the appointed King of Zion, shall not only reign as long as the sun shall shine upon the earth, but "men shall be blessed in him: all nations shall call him blessed." The Gospel is adapted to man as such—to all men. It contemplates, not a specific class or order of men, but *man* in the large and generic sense. The Son of God has "received gifts for men." His empire embraces and secures the best interests of our fallen race. "Men shall be blessed in him." "All nations shall call him blessed." The Gospel is adapted, not to the Jew, nor to the Gentile alone; not to the civilized, nor to the barbarous exclusively—but to "all nations." And one nation after another, under the agencies which God has ordained, shall welcome the Gospel, as adapted to their common circumstances and their common wants, till an entire world of nations shall mingle their voices and send up the homage of their hearts in one universal song.

The single sentiment I shall attempt to illustrate is this: *The religion of the Bible is adapted, in its nature, to become the exclusive religion of our world.*

1. It is accommodated to every *stage of human society.*

I shall not here enter upon any nice speculations respecting the natural state of man, considered merely as an intellectual and social being; nor attempt to settle the question whether that state is savage or civilized. The apostacy of our race occupies so early a page in the history of the world, that it may be difficult for us even to picture to ourselves, with any degree of certainty, what our condition would have been, as it regards social habits, intellectual progress, or the arts of cultivated life, had sin never marred this once

lovely heritage of God. What is now called the state of nature—the wild and savage state, to which we may easily trace back the most refined and polished nations—would probably never have existed; and the more elevated conditions of society, which are now altogether adventitious, and which are superinduced by much care and culture, might have been perfectly natural to man. But these speculations apart, it is sufficient for my present purpose to refer you to the social condition of nations as it is, and remind you of the diversified forms of human society which the world actually presents. These are not less marked and various than the geographical surface of different countries, or than personal form, the color of the skin, or the features of the human face.

A single glance at the world as it is, and this the intelligent eye has already taken, will save the speaker the necessity of entering into detail. We have on the surface of this globe a population almost infinitely diversified: the polished European, and his descendants not less elevated, in almost every land; the wild Arab, the wandering Tartar, the inert southern Asiatic, the bigoted Jew, the proud and self-confident Turk, the fierce cannibal of Australia, the debased Hottentot, the ignorant Greenlander, and the rude and savage tenant of our own native forests:—and these furnish but a mere specimen of the human race. Nations differ in almost every thing—in their modes of obtaining a livelihood, in civilization and intellectual culture, in moral habits and religious rites.

But the Gospel makes an appeal which men, in all these diversified national circumstances, are capable of feeling. This appeal they have felt. In the days of the apostles, the truth of God overleaped the frame-work of national caste, and evinced, in every land where its truths were announced, its power to save. And facts of the same character are interwoven with the whole history of modern missions. Such have been the triumphs of the Gospel in our day, that the foolishness of infidelity, which has loudly asserted that christianity cannot be propagated among the nations who differ in their habits and religions from those who have long been under the influence of this system, has been rebuked and put to silence. The religion of the Bible is just such a scheme as is demanded, in order to accomplish the great objects which it proposes. As it is designed for a world, so it is suited to the exigencies of a world. It has a universality of purpose, and a universality of character, in order to carry out and perfect that purpose. It takes the world as it is, and goes about the work of making it better. It can reach men just

where they are, notwithstanding their national peculiarities, and make them the friends of God and the heirs of heaven. It needs no pioneer. It asks for no herald to invoke other agencies to prepare the way for its coming and reception. It is itself the pioneer of Jehovah—the herald of the great King.

These things can be affirmed only of the Gospel. Were we to examine all the systems of ancient and modern philosophy which have proposed to make men wise and happy, and submit them to a critical analysis, we should perceive that they are all strongly tinged with the spirit of the age and nation in which they originated; and were, at the same time, capable only of a limited application. Carry these systems across a few lines of latitude or longitude, and they become exotics in an ungenial clime and perish of themselves. Protract their existence a single century, upon the very soil which gave them birth, and among the very people who originated and cherished their dogmas, and they become superannuated and die of old age. The same is true of the religions of the world. They are all local and temporary—and well they may be, for they are dependent on circumstances for their very existence. It would be a thing next to impossible to bring the Turks and the Greenlanders to exchange religions; and yet Turkey and Greenland may be made to feel the truth of God, and submit to its power. No system of false philosophy has ever been universal—no single form of paganism has established its dominion over the nations of the earth. But the Gospel is indigenous in every soil where it is planted. It is at home in every land. It accomplishes its own appropriate work wherever it goes, for God is in it.

I would not intimate in these remarks, that different states of society may not be more or less favorable to the propagation of the Gospel; nor deny that auxiliary agencies may be employed to unfold, diffuse, and enforce the truth of God; and least of all would I affirm that the Gospel will leave a nation as it finds it. Civilization and the useful arts of life, letters and refinement, in one word, all that can elevate man in the scale of being, promote his happiness, or adorn and beautify his social character, have never failed, other things being favorable, to follow in the footsteps of this revelation from heaven.

2. The Gospel is suited to the *common wants of man.*

This system was not contrived to relieve us from some factitious evils, nor to minister to our artificial wants; but it contemplates the world in its true light, and undertakes at once to mitigate,

and ultimately to root out, all suffering from the kingdom of Christ.

And here we may see the difference between the Gospel and every antagonist and conflicting system. It is the difference between what is particular and what is general—between what is limited to individuals, and what is common to all men—between what is restricted to one country or one age, and what may be applied with equal propriety and practical effect to every country of the globe, or to every period from the beginning to the end of time. The Gospel overlooks, as unworthy of its high and heavenly aims, that which is circumstantial, local, and temporary; and selects, as the object of its benevolence, that which is essential, unlimited, and enduring. Among the pagans, many a deity has derived his existence from a mountain, stream, or forest. Altars and forms of worship have been called into being to avert some impending calamity, to stay the ravages of famine, to mitigate the rage of pestilence, or to turn aside the bloody scourge of war. The form and productions of a country, the customs of domestic and social life, the prevalence of certain types of disease, the peaceful or warlike habits of a people, and an endless catalogue of like circumstances, have not only shaped and modified, but have actually created systems of religious belief and practice.

But the Gospel is constructed upon another principle. It professes to supply what is most needful for man, upon a nobler and more magnificent scale. It never attempts, as most false religions do, to remove the trivial and incidental evils of life; to guard men against the disabilities which belong to their specific circumstances; nor to ward off disease or death by charms or talismanic power; but regarding all these as light afflictions which endure but for a moment, it settles down at once upon the common wants of men, as pilgrims on the earth and the heirs of eternity.

A few of the common wants of our dying world, for which the Gospel effectually provides, may very properly be enumerated in this place.

Man, in relation to all kinds of knowledge, is the subject of instruction; and in nothing does he more imperatively demand it than in religion. The lights of this world have become so dimmed, that he never clearly sees, nor fully performs his duties to God or his fellows, till a purer and brighter orb in heaven shines upon him. Sin has well nigh obliterated the perceptions of God and duty from the human mind. The world is perishing for the want of spiritual knowledge. This is seen and felt every where. Not a soul on earth can find the way to heaven without the special interposition of

God; and whether he communicates himself silently and mysteriously, in here and there a solitary case, without a written revelation, we are not informed, and it is a problem which we are not required to solve. But this we do know, for God has taught it, that the Bible is the grand source of religious instruction. The nations are in midnight without it. It is a darkness without the prospect of a dawn. It is deep, dense, central, visible; and not a star of promise has been seen in the heavens, as the harbinger of an opening day, by any telescope which nature or art has been able to construct. Without the Gospel, men are every where destitute of that knowledge necessary to the well-being of the soul; and with it, they have every thing which God himself deemed essential when their salvation was the grand object to be accomplished. This fallen world needs an infallible guide, and that guide is to be found alone in a written revelation. No decrees of popes or councils can supply its place. No tradition, though it were to descend from heaven, and emanate from the throne of God, can become a substitute. The Jew, the Pagan, the Mohammedan, the Catholic, the Protestant, all need this volume. It is adapted to the common wants of a world; and the nation, whether refined or barbarous, that is destitute of it, is living without the sun.

But man needs not only an infallible instructer, but support under the nameless evils which sin has inflicted upon him. In every country under heaven, on every continent and every island of the sea, he is hardly less miserable than he is sinful. And yet the religion of the Saviour can mingle the ingredients of comfort in every bitter cup. Passing over a long list of ills which flesh is heir to, I would fix your attention on two to which all men are subject in whatever state of society or condition of life, and for which the Gospel provides a perfect remedy. I refer to remorse of conscience and the sting of death. These are co-extensive with the fallen race. Sin is an evil of so malignant a character, that it reveals itself in the present life—it is followed by a present retribution. Verily, there "is a God that judgeth in the earth." The poor pagan feels this, and hence his sacrifices and his self-inflicted tortures. It is on this principle that penance and pilgrimages belong to most systems of false religion. But the Gospel alone can calm the troubled spirit, pluck away the deep-seated anguish of the heart, and inspire that hope which prophesies of heaven. And not only are the great evils of life provided for by the religion of Christ, but death itself—that

event every where dreaded in our world—that event which may, in itself, be considered the sum and concentration of all earthly ills—the primeval curse of God upon a world of rebels, may be divested of all its unloveliness, and disarmed of all its inflictions, and be converted into the richest blessing. The christian victor's song is, "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?"

3. The Gospel is adapted *to every order of mind.*

In this respect it differs from all human systems. Among the most distinguished ancient nations they had one religion for the learned, and another for the illiterate. This was true in Greece, and probably, to some extent, in Rome. Their great men, and especially their sages and philosophers, gave little or no credit to the doctrines of polytheism admitted by the vulgar; but on the other hand approximated to something like a pure theism in their religious belief. I would not affirm that this was universal, possibly it was not even general; but, in many cases, it is an unquestioned fact. As to their systems of philosophy, they were too refined and subtle to be received by common minds. I do not say *understood*, for it may be fairly doubted whether they were understood by any. They were marked by intellectual caste; and this stamp had been put upon them intentionally, in order to protect the prerogatives of great minds, and to show the common mass of men that they had no right to think. Neither the system of the Stoics nor of the Epicureans could have become universal. They were limited by their very nature; the former to a certain order of mind, and the latter to a certain moral or physical temperament—and both of them entirely inapplicable, in all their parts and ramifications, to the society or population of any country. Were we to examine the speculations of any or every ancient philosopher, trace out the various systems, examine their origin, scrutinize their purposes or intentions, and follow their progress to their final results, we should arrive at this conclusion, that they were never designed for the world at large, and being adapted to a particular order of intellect, their influence, whether good or bad, would be restricted to a small number of individuals wherever their doctrines might be embraced.

By the side of these intellectual and moral schemes, contemplate the character of the Gospel in relation to the single feature of its adaptedness to every order of mind. While some religions

are suited to the unlettered, and some to the cultivated, and while the same may be affirmed of certain systems of philosophy and morals, the Bible scheme is adapted to the intellect of every man. No elevation of mind can rise above the sublimity of its truths, no sketch of thought can go beyond the vast reach of its purpose, no analytic powers can detect a discordant element in its grand and complicated system. It teaches the great man, and makes him wiser and better. Time would fail me were I to attempt to enumerate the men of mighty minds, the giants of the earth, who have towered above their fellows, as the oak above the saplings of the forest, who, at the same time, have acknowledged themselves indebted for their best lessons of instruction, to the Bible. Boyle, of whom it has been said, "To him we owe the secrets of fire, air, water, animals, vegetables, fossils, so that from his works may be deduced the whole system of natural knowledge," was in the habit of reading this letter from heaven upon his knees; and Newton, that child-like sage, investigated the wonders of revelation with an intensity not less excited and profound than that with which he scanned the starry heavens, or passed his measuring-line around the earth, or unbraided the complicated tissue of light.

Nor was this communication from God made for the instruction or entertainment of great minds alone, but is equally adapted to the humble and the unlettered. It is in revelation as in nature: sublimity and simplicity are always united. The same volume which furnishes the richest instructions to the sage, can be understood and enjoyed with as fine a relish by the husbandman who follows the plough, by the mechanic in his work-shop, or by the child in the Sabbath-school. What a vast variety, with respect to mental power and acquirement, may be found in the ranks of believers; and yet, gathered as they are from the four winds of heaven, they all entertain essentially the same views of the way of salvation, and have manifestly imbibed the same spirit. Indeed I may add, what no one who has studied this subject can have overlooked, that the Gospel, being designed for a world as it is—a world in which the great majority of its inhabitants are ignorant and uninstructed, has been formed for the very purpose of meeting this case. It is a revelation to the benighted and the lowly. It teaches the sublimest truths in such a manner that babes may understand them, and inculcates the simplest with such a heavenly elevation and pathos, that minds of

the largest compass and the profoundest thought are instructed and delighted.

4. The Gospel counteracts sin in *every possible condition.*

Sin is the source of all the other evils which prevail under the government of God; and the object of the coming of Christ, and the introduction and propagation of the Gospel, is the extermination of this great evil from our world. The Bible describes its nature, and tells us of its present and future consequences. It holds up, in the sun-light of eternal truth, its malignant features, and, for an illustration of its fruits, points us to a bleeding earth and a burning hell. The introduction of this evil into our world was the work of Satan; and "for this purpose the Son of God was manifested that he might destroy the works of the devil." No other system of morals or religion has made an attack upon sin as such. Some particular sins have been denounced, and to a certain extent, no doubt, counteracted by their practical influence; but it was reserved for the Gospel alone to proclaim war against every sin, great and small. It spares no man; it has no protecting shield for the transgressor. It has no mantle of charity to inwrap the sinner, and thus cover up his true character as the enemy of God. It lays the axe "at the root of the trees," and hews down the tall cedar as well as the withered bramble. It condemns the sinning monarch in terms as unsparing and uncompromising as it does the sinning beggar. For the city and the country, for the refined and the ignoble, for christian and for pagan lands, there is but one law—"Without holiness no man shall see the Lord." It has no respect to age, station, learning, country, kindred, sex, family, or profession in life, but bears testimony against all who love and practice sin.

But the Gospel does something more than describe the nature of sin, and point out the present and future woes which hang around a wicked heart and life. It proposes a remedy. It would relieve our sinful and suffering world from its accumulated evils by striking a death-blow at the very root of all mischief. The Gospel is a scheme contrived of God and revealed from heaven for the removal of sin. It undertakes to make men happy only by this process. It provides for the pardon of sin through the blood of the atonement; and by the instrumentality of truth, and the agency of the Spirit, carries on in the heart of the penitent and believing sinner a work of progressive sanctification, which will be rendered perfect and triumphant in heaven. And unless

this effect can be produced, of what use is any scheme of religion for such a world as this? A man may pass through a thousand changes, and till he pass from death to life, from sin to holiness, he wears his chains, and is on the way to execution. The great curse is still on him, and he must be miserable. Sin is uncancelled, and he cannot be happy Of what avail are the stripes and lacerations which are self-inflicted by the poor pagan; or the austerities and penance of the Romanist; or the fine speculations of the unitarian or the deist on the beauty of virtue and the benevolence of God, while no radical change is effected in the character? Man is every where a sinner; and in all these human schemes and devices there is no provision for the removal of this fundamental evil. No system of religion, whatever name it may wear, whether christian or pagan, can supply the moral demands of such a world as ours, unless it commence with sin. Spare this and you ruin the world. Leave this unprovided for, and you shut for ever the gate of heaven. Omit this single item, and you open wide the door of perdition. Strike out from your scheme the provision for pardon and the power of sanctification, and you have a religion which can never become universal, and would be of no use were it to become universal, for it would bring no relief to a sinful world. But such is not the Gospel of the Son of God.

5. The Gospel is not dependant on any system of *human philosophy*.

The Bible teaches "as one having authority, and not as the scribes." In narrating facts, it records them as they are, and in their proper relations; in the revelation of doctrines, it presents them as fundamental truths which are to be accredited, and makes no explanations of the former, and enters into no reasonings respecting the latter. It discloses facts and principles of which all men, or the generality of men were before ignorant, or in which, at least, they were but imperfectly instructed; and there it leaves them. And there these truths stand stereotyped for ever, without change of form or feature. The Gospel borrows nothing from the reigning philosophy, for it has nothing to decorate that it may attract the eyes of men; nothing to render palatable by courting the popular taste; nothing to explain, nothing to reconcile. From the commencement to the close of its communications to our world, though these extend through more than fifteen centuries, and were furnished by a large num-

ber of sacred penmen, it never loses sight of one fixed purpose, and that is to tell men what *truth* is. And when this is done, its work is finished. It never comments or philosophises upon its own production. Hence the Bible, like its Author, has a kind of ubiquity, and can live every where; and, like him, it has a perpetuity of existence, and is the same in every age. Systems of human philosophy may rise and fall, and yet Bible truth flows on in a steady and majestic stream, and not its surface is rippled by the change.

In the interpretation of revealed truth, and in the construction of human creeds and symbols, as well as in all the systems of false religion, the philosophy of the age, both intellectual and moral, and perhaps I might add in some cases, natural philosophy too, has exerted a very perceptible influence. This is what we might expect. If men construct a religion, it must be of course a human religion, and it will partake of human thoughts and qualities. Men cannot beget angels. We can hardly look upon one of these earthly productions without being able to detect its parentage, and to tell the age and country of its birth. The same is the case, to some extent, of all human symbols of the true religion. The creeds and commentaries of each particular age and nation embody much which belongs to that age and nation. Indeed, we cannot expect it should be otherwise; for they are the productions of men, and fathers generally live a second life in their children. But the Bible occupies an independent position. It is the production of God. It depends on no other system. It borrows nothing from any other. Other systems live, flourish, wane, and die; but this remains the same. It has already survived, amidst the changing theories and speculations of the world, almost six thousand years; and it is yet clad in all the freshness of its glory, as it was in the day when it was born in heaven, and sent down to the earth for our instruction. Time has not whitened its locks, or palsied its hand, or chilled its heart. Systems of philosophy and modes of interpretation, one after another, have gone down to the sepulchre, and are known only in their epitaph; but the Gospel lives, and is powerful to save. Other systems which are founded in error will in like manner pass away; but the religion of the Bible will never cease to exist and act upon the world till all that God has greatly purposed and kindly promised shall be fully accomplished. Its truths may be tinged or obscured by a false philo-

sophy, or by human speculations, but this effect is local and temporary. These things are no part of the system. The Bible remains the same; and, at another day, or in another country, all is restored. Clouds and mists may, in one hemisphere, or for a few days, cover the face of the sun and shut out the light, but the sun is not extinguished. He is always shining somewhere; and the clouds and mists of all human theories will by and by be dissipated, and he will break forth, and in full-orbed radiance shine every where.

6. The Gospel has no necessary connection with any form of *human government.*

The Bible acknowledges the right and sanctions the powers and prerogatives of civil government; but it does not prescribe any particular form. The most that is said on this subject in the New Testament, is rather incidental than direct; and is addressed principally to christians, enjoining it upon them to be peaceful subjects of whatever government may happen to exist. The following are specimens: "Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be, are ordained of God. Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God; and they that resist, shall receive to themselves damnation." And again: "Render therefore to all their dues: tribute to whom tribute is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honor to whom honor." It is also said, "Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake: whether it be to the king, as supreme; or unto governors, as unto them that are sent by him for the punishment of evil-doers, and for the praise of them that do well."

This language is accommodated to the existing governments of the apostolic age; but the spirit of these precepts may be applied with equal propriety to any and every form of civil and political institutions. Had the Gospel assumed any other ground than this, it would have been fatal to its prospects as designed for a universal religion. If any one form had been selected and approved, and others condemned, it would have converted the message of heaven into a political proclamation, and all nations, except those whose institutions might have received its approval, would have armed themselves against its approach. It would have been met and repelled with the same spirit with which men are accustomed to meet and repel invading fleets and armies.

That the Gospel is friendly to the rights of man and the liberties of the world, is a proposition too obvious to need proof. The influence of this system, wherever it is cordially received, is felt upon every great interest of society—upon the people and upon the government. It will show itself upon the legislation of a country—upon the character and the execution of its laws—and in various ways, and by pervading and controlling influences peculiar to itself, destroy oppression, and diffuse and protect equal rights among men. It makes good citizens and good rulers, without interfering directly either with the form or administration of government.

It was owing to this characteristic of the Gospel that the first heralds of the cross gained access with their message to every country, notwithstanding the peculiar jealousies of the age respecting international communication; and though often accused of treason, they were never convicted of the charge. And it was on this principle that, without an attack upon any political institution, they introduced a train of moral causes which have greatly modified and well nigh revolutionized the governments of the civilized world. And it is on the same principle that modern missionaries might be permitted to go every where and freely and fully proclaim their message, without any alarm on the part of existing governments. Indeed, this is the prevailing temper of the reigning powers of the earth at this moment. And in those cases where christian missions are excluded by the laws of the land, their enactments are either founded on ignorance of the real objects of the enterprise, or, as is more generally the fact, are designed to protect some false system of religion which has become publicly wedded to the state, and which, every one must know, would inevitably fall before the powers of the Gospel.

Remarks.

1. The religion of the Bible must be *true*.

It cannot be the product of the human mind. Its adaptation to the complicated circumstances—to the wants, the sins, and the miseries of the whole world, and that, too, through every period of its existence, is peculiar to itself, and has a parallel in no other system. This one property of the Gospel would require a greater compass of thought and stretch of ingenuity, a

more intimate knowledge of facts, a clearer perception of causes and effects, and final results—of existing evils and their infallible remedies, than belong to the finite mind. You have only to compare the religion of the Bible with other systems, and you discern the difference between God's work and man's. The one undertakes only to provide for what is limited to time and place; the other, dispensing with ages and localities, takes a broad sweep, like the mind of its Author, and actually provides for what always exists, and is every where to be found.

There is not an individual religion of paganism among the nameless varieties that fill the world; not a speculation of ancient or modern philosophy; not a thought in the Vedas or Shaster of the Hindoos; not a disclosure in the koran, the pretended revelation of Mohammed; not a system of error, or any part of a system, in any age or country, but might be the production of the human intellect and heart, and would ever be likely to be, in the same existing circumstances. But I ask, who but God could make the Bible? I speak now only of its adaptedness to the purpose for which it was intended. What eye but that which surveys the world at a glance, and beholds all nations, with their multifarious ills and complicated wants, as they are, and reads with intuitive certainty the moral pulsation of every heart, could see far enough, and wide enough, and deep enough, for such a work? What but the all-comprehensive mind could devise a religious system, humble in its grandeur and majestic in its simplicity, which should be equally applicable to men in every nation and every age: which has power to reclaim the heart and control the life; to disarm the world of its enmity against God; to restore the wanderer; raise the disconsolate; and light up a smile on the pale cheek of death? Surely this is no common undertaking? There is but one Being who ever thought of doing it; and the volume that reveals this purpose has, written deeply and indelibly upon its sacred page, *the signature of God.*

2. The Gospel will finally *prevail.*

This might be inferred with great certainty from the fact, or the admission, that God is its Author. If he constructed the scheme, it was with some object in view; for some great and worthy purpose. The sins, and tears, and death-groans of our world had gone up to heaven, and God had fixed his heart on man's redemption. For this he formed the plan, sent his

Son, accepted the sacrifice of his blood, and made, in his name, proclamation of pardon and peace to this great family of rebels. And shall not this plan go into full effect? Will the great Architect leave his noble edifice half finished? "God is not man, that he should lie; neither the son of man, that he should repent. Hath he said it, and shall he not do it? Or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good?" Hear his own declaration; "The Lord hath made bare his holy arm in the eyes of all nations: and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God." His purpose is clearly expressed, and every jot and tittle shall be accomplished.

For the renovation of this world, we are not to forget that God has adopted a system of agencies suited to the object to be accomplished. The Gospel is not a dead letter, but "the power of God, and the wisdom of God." It embodies in itself the most effective moral influences which operate any where in the vast empire of God. It was contrived for a world in the ruins of sin, and it is the master-piece of Jehovah—the concentration of all that is wise and magnificent in heaven. It is just what the dying millions of our world need. It can reach and save them. Its appeals are such as human minds and hearts can comprehend and feel. It comes home to "the business and bosoms" of men with a conviction and pathos with which no other system is armed. Every blow it strikes in our world, is felt upon some interest, and tells upon its final destiny. And securing, as it does, in the hands of a faithful ministry and a praying church, the presence and power of the Spirit of God, it will go forth in its strength to the conquest of the world. And what shall stay the progress of that scheme of grace and restoration which God has constructed—which is adapted to man any where and every where—which has already gathered the first-fruits of the coming harvest—which has saved its millions in ages past—which is saving its tens of millions in the present age, and in reference to the faithful administration of which by his devoted servants, Christ himself has said, "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world?"

3. All who possess the Gospel should do all they can *to communicate it to others.*

This subject makes an appeal to christians which they must not, cannot resist. The Gospel, my brethren, has been committed to us, and there is no aspect in which this matter can be viewed which does not urge, in the tenderest and most powerful manner, our duty

and our responsibility upon us. We have the very scheme of mercy which the world needs, and without which the world must perish. And this dearest gift of heaven was put into our hands, not that we should imprison or chain it, but that we should, to the very last stretch of our power, give to it "the wings of the morning," and bid it fly to the uttermost parts of the earth. The wants of our dying world, the nature of the Gospel, the command of heaven, the principle of benevolence, the pledge of success, the seal of God upon all past efforts, and the cheering aspect of this heaven-born enterprise of missions, all—*all* urge us to stand up like men upon whom the vows of God rest, to whom the eyes of perishing millions are directed, and whose hearts have taken hold on the interests of eternity, and then do as Christ and conscience would have us. God has opened wide the door of the world before us. The unevangelized millions of the earth feel, at this moment, more deeply than they ever felt, their need of the Gospel and its attending institutions, and its consequent moral, literary, social, and political blessings. And can we go back, or even stand still, when we contemplate what God has already permitted us to do, or has kindly done by us, in the work of making the world what he would have it? Let the American Board and American christians look at things as they are—at their eighty missionary stations, which appear as so many cultivated spots scattered here and there through the deep and dense wilderness of paganism—at their 478 foreign and native laborers, whose toils have already beautified these gardens of God —at their 10,810 reclaimed wanderers who have taken shelter in the bosom of the church the last year—at their 24 boarding-schools, with their 807 pupils—at their 415 free-schools, with their 21,606 little inmates praying for instruction,—and then ask, shall this work cease? Shall another midnight succeed this dawning day? This is the time and this the place to settle this question. Oh, let us lift our streaming eyes and bleeding hearts to heaven, and, with a simple reliance on God, say this work must not cease.

We, my christian friends, are engaged in an enterprise that honors God and blesses men; an enterprise in which the angels might wish to bear even an humble part—the progress of which is intensely engaged upon by all the good on earth and all the perfected in glory, and the completion of which will fill the world with songs of blessedness, and heaven with shouts of endless triumph.

May God inspire us for this work, and take the glory to himself: AMEN AND AMEN.

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SERMON CCLXXXIX.

BY DAVID R. DOWNER.

NEW-YORK CITY.

INTEMPERANCE THE GREAT DESTROYER.

"*Thou shalt not kill.*"—Exodus, 20 : 13.

In the application of this precept of the decalogue to the subject of temperance, we propose to show—

I. That the use of intoxicating liquor, under every form, as a beverage, tends to kill.

II. The amount of death thus annually produced.

III. The nature of this death.

IV. That all who use, make, or engage in the traffic of this article as a beverage, are guilty of the violation of the sixth commandment, and responsible for the death thus effected.

In the proof of the position that the use of intoxicating liquor as a drink, under every form, tends to kill, we adduce,

1. The testimony of the *chemist*, whose appropriate business it is to analyze the nature and the properties of substances, and to settle the verdict of a jury of inquest, in case of death by poison. This class of men testify, that the substance which intoxicates, and which men so much love and seek in brandy, rum, wine, cider, and all the inebriating liquors, is alcohol, one of the most active and powerful of the narcotic vegetable poisons. They affirm that it possesses no nutritious qualities whatever; that it invariably weakens, and ultimately destroys, every organ of the body

with which it comes in contact; that the quantity, as in the case of arsenic, prussic acid, or hemlock, has only to be increased to produce instantaneous death; and that the introduction of even a small portion into the vein of an animal will destroy life. They also affirm, that it is a poison so diffusive and subtle, that it rapidly circulates through the arteries and veins, the lungs and the heart, penetrating the smallest nerves, the most delicate fibres, the secret recesses of the brain, and in short, through every part of the system. The inebriate is full of this deadly poison. It may be distilled from his liver, lungs, and blood, and be discovered in every breath. It has indeed been found in the brain in such quantities as to be detected by the senses, and to blaze on the application of fire. Such, from actual experiment, is the testimony of the chemist, that alcohol, whether taken from the bottle or the brain of the drunkard, is the same destructive poison.

2. We present the testimony of the *medical profession.*

The highest medical authorities of Great Britain being examined in large numbers before the committee appointed by the British parliament to inquire into the causes of drunkenness, unanimously testified "That ardent spirits are absolutely poisonous to the human constitution;—that in no case whatever are they necessary, or even useful to persons in health;—that they are always, in every case, and to the smallest extent, deleterious, pernicious, or destructive, according to the proportions in which they may be taken into the system." They also testified "that destruction of health, premature decrepitude in the old, stinted growth and general debility and decay in the youth —that paralysis, idiotcy, delirium tremens, disease in every form and shape, were the consequences of the use of this poison." Dr. Rush, indeed, fifty years ago, declared that a large proportion of the most painful and fatal diseases were thus directly produced. Another distinguished physician has testified, that "Amidst all the evils of human life, no cause whatever of disease has so wide a range, or so large a share, as the use of spirits." Between three and four hundred physicians in the city of New-York, and about seven thousand in America and in Europe, have added their testimony to that of the medical authorities before noticed. Thus we have arrayed before us a jury of more than seven thousand men, disinterested, intelligent, and in every respect competent to settle the question. In opposition to such evidence, the strongest the case admits, will any man venture to declare that intoxicating liquors are either a wholesome or a harmless beverage? Will any dealer in these drinks maintain that he is not selling poison?

3. We appeal to the objector's *own senses*, and *to facts* established by experience and observation.

Is there one engaged in the traffic but has before him, every hour of the day, sad illustrations of the poisonous properties of alcohol? A grocer's clerk in Albany a short time since, sold a little boy eleven years old a pint of raw brandy; the child drank it, and in one hour, in defiance of medical skill, was a corpse. I do not stop here to inquire who was the murderer of that boy; but simply to ask, was it not the brandy that killed him? Look into our alms-houses, hospitals, and penitentiaries, and survey the victims of intemperance. Is there one among them all that bears not the well-known marks of the fatal poison? We ask those engaged in the traffic, who maintain that they are not selling poison, to look upon their customers as they throng their bar or counter. A short time since, the hue of health was painted on their cheek, their eye was bright, and their step was firm. Is it so now? Ah! how loudly and unequivocally do those pale and emaciated faces, those livid lips and stammering tongues, those tremulous hands and staggering steps prove that they are poisoned. Every one of them feels the venom rankling in his veins, feels that rum is killing him. His wife in tears and sighs exclaims, "Rum is killing my husband." His children, as they gaze on the loathsome and wretched form of their parent, in shame and grief cry out, "Rum is killing father:" and every one who sees and knows him admits the fatal truth. The evidence that alcohol is a poison, no intelligent, candid man will attempt to dispute. He might as well deny the testimony of his own senses. We proceed to exhibit,

II. THE AMOUNT OF DEATH ANNUALLY PRODUCED BY THIS POISON.

From this investigation our mind instinctively shrinks appalled, like that of one amidst the slain on the field of battle. We know not where to begin to count the wounded, the dying, and the dead. What part of our world is exempted from the awful scourge? We may safely infer, from estimates recently made, that at least fifty thousand in this country, eighty thousand in Great Britain, three hundred thousand in France, annually perish by the use of this poison. The Duke of Orleans recently declared to a distinguished American gentleman, that more than one third of the population of France were engaged either in the production or sale of intoxicating drinks. Thus we have in these three most enlightened countries on earth, nearly a half million of human beings—an army more numerous than

that of Napoleon in his glory, every year slain by this great destroyer.

And directly in the rear of this vast multitude, there are in these countries at least three millions treading in the drunkard's path, and pressing rapidly their way down to the drunkard's grave. Yet, awful as is this destruction of human life, what is it compared with the whole amount thus produced in the world? Let it be remembered, that our estimate has reference only to France, Great Britain, and the United States. We have said nothing of Sweden, with her one hundred and seventy thousand distilleries, in a population of three millions; nothing of Russia, Italy, Spain, and other portions of Europe noted for intemperance; nothing of the islands of the sea, some of which are actually becoming depopulated by the use of strong drink. Neither have we spoken of the southern portion of this continent, of Africa, or of Asia, where, in proportion to the facilities of procuring the means of intoxication, this vice prevails to a most fearful extent. Mr. Bruce, (as reported by Dr. Scudder,) speaking of the drunkenness of India, says, "That while he was sitting-magistrate in the police-office at Madras, during the early part of last year, it had come to his knowledge that the practice of drinking ardent spirit prevailed extensively among all classes of the native community; and that it had been found, from the most vigilant observation, that one half of the native population were daily intoxicated." This description, we apprehend, to a certain extent, will apply to the other portions of Asia. To the number thus directly destroyed by alcohol, let there be added the thousands that perish annually by shipwrecks, fires, and accidents of different kinds, three-fourths of which may be traced to intemperance. Also the murders, the manslaughters, the loss of life by robberies, riots, tumults, and other great enormities,—four-fifths of which Chief Justice Hale, two centuries ago, declared resulted from excessive drinking,—and what a frightful list of mortality have we before us. It exceeds all computation.

Where is the scourge that can for a moment be brought into comparison with that of intemperance? It is one that never ceases. The awful work of destruction has been going on for centuries, like "the worm that dieth not, and the fire that is not quenched." Two hundred years since, Lord Bacon declared "that all the crimes on earth did not destroy as many of the human race as drunkenness." Walter Scott, in his Life of Napoleon, speaking of the loss sustained by England on the field of Waterloo, says, "that fifteen thousand men killed and wounded threw half Britain into mourning. It required all the solid advantages of that day to reconcile the mind to the high

price at which it was purchased." Here is a carnage not only exhibited once, and that on a single field, but every year, and every day, throughout the world. Where is the eye that sees not its woes? Where is the ear that hears not its groans? Where is the heart that does not bleed, because of the loss of some dear relative, friend, or companion? We may indeed say with the prophet, "the land mourneth because of drunkenness." It has indeed destroyed more lives than all the weapons of war and the desolations of gunpowder. It has sent more human beings to the grave than the slave-trade, with all its horrors—than the plague, the earthquake, the fire, the flood, the famine, and the pestilence. It is truly "the pestilence that walketh in darkness, and the destruction that wasteth at noon-day." Where is the noble race, with its unnumbered tribes, that once possessed this soil, bathed in these waters, roamed over these mountains, and pitched their tents in these valleys? The great destroyer has been abroad in the land, with a weapon more terrible, and far more fatal, than the tomahawk or scalping-knife. We are overwhelmed as we gaze upon the mass of mortality wasting away under the fires of alcohol, and attempt to compute the dying and the dead.

III. WHAT IS THE NATURE of THE DEATH *thus produced?* Or, when alcohol kills, *how and what does it kill?*

1. Alcohol, as it kills, deranges and destroys *the mind.*

Men killed by other poisons, generally possess their reason until the last moment. This at once attacks the citadel of the soul, enfeebling and wasting every faculty. By it the noblest intellect is prostrated and laid in ruins. And just so far as men come under the influence of the poison, do they approach idiotism or madness. It invariably produces temporary insanity, and not unfrequently terminates in permanent derangement; of which truth our hospitals for the insane furnish most sad and heart-rending illustrations.

2. Alcohol, as it kills, destroys all *the tender and amiable qualities of our nature.*

As no other poison, it hardens the heart, and prepares it for the perpetration of the most horrible crimes. A few years since, a husband having murdered his wife, with his own hand butchered his six motherless children, and placed one of them to broil on the fire. What other poison in the universe could have turned the once amiable and affectionate father into the most horrid of monsters? This poison penetrated his heart, and like the blast of the simoon, withered all that was tender and lovely.

A son, instigated by a mother to shoot a neighbor, as he raised his rifle, shuddered at the thought of his crime, and dropped the fatal instrument. His mother standing by his side, with a whiskey bottle in her hand, perceiving the agitation of her son, instantly presented him the poison. He drank; then with a steady hand and eye levelled his rifle and killed the man. Thus alcohol hardens the heart, and stimulates to the commission of crime. "By one fatal act," said Judge Edwards, in pronouncing sentence of death on James Ransom, "your wife has been sent to the cold and silent mansions of the dead, your children were deprived of all the endearments and fostering care of their mother, and you are fated to expiate your offence upon a gallows. Upon a review of the shocking transaction, the question naturally presents itself, what could have so perverted your nature? what could have so steeled your heart? The answer is, intoxicating liquor. It has had the effect to estrange you from the most endearing relation, from the ties of blood, from your obligations to your fellow-beings, and to your Creator." Intemperance is the great leading cause of crime. Thus it is supposed that nine-tenths of all the criminal offences in the land take their origin.

The late district-attorney of New-York city declared that every murder, twenty-two in number, that it was his duty to examine while in office, were traced to the use of intoxicating drinks. Indeed, all the murders, it has been ascertained, with the exception of three, in this city, for the space of fifteen years, arose from this cause.

3. Intemperance, above all other vices, *enslaves* man; it destroys his liberty.

Not only does it "bite like a serpent and sting like an adder," but it coils around the miserable victim, and binds him as it stings, with a serpent's grasp. In vain does he struggle to escape. We have seen the gray-headed man walk his room, in agony intense, and weep under tender reproof, as if his heart would break, and heard him cry out in broken sentences, "I am lost, for ever lost. Could I escape, ten thousand worlds, did I possess them, would I give. My resolutions, my promises, and my prayers are as empty as the wind; I have only to see, or even smell the poison, and I am borne away by an uncontrolable thirst. Thus I live a slave, and a miserable slave must I die." "Put down that cup," said one to a drunkard. The poor creature pressing it to his lips, exclaimed, "Rather burn in an eternal hell than give it up." Thus the drunkard dies, borne down under the pressure of a most loathsome and cruel bondage.

4. Alcohol kills *the body with pain unutterably severe and most protracted.*

"Who hath wo? Who hath sorrow? Who hath wounds without cause? They that tarry long at the wine, they that go to seek mixed wine." The mere physical suffering endured by the drunkard from the time he commences his ruinous course until its termination, can only be conceived by the wretched inebriate himself. None but a drunkard knows what a drunkard suffers. In addition to a variety of diseases, he has ever within, unless sated with the poison, a burning, raging thirst, for the momentary relief of which he will sacrifice his property, his character, his body, and his soul. He will indeed subject himself to the most menial service, pledge the last article of his furniture, sell his Bible, part with the last garment, and snatch the last morsel from the mouth of his starving child. No language can describe, no pencil can depict a drunkard's sufferings. His bosom is the emblem of hell. His property gone, his character ruined, his tenderest relations sundered, his passions and appetites uncontrolled, his body diseased and loathsome throughout, and all his hopes of immortality blasted—what is there left for him "but a certain fearful looking-for of judgment?" Does not every feature of his countenance bespeak the horrid woes within? What is it but suffering intolerable that drives so many of the wretched victims on to madness and to suicide? See the poor creature in the last stages of disease with the delirium tremens. What writhings of body! What distortion of feature! What dismal groans and frightful shrieks! Once it was my lot to stand by the bed-side of such a sufferer and witness his awful death. God grant that I may never see another such. It seemed as if all the pains and woes of earth had been concentrated in his bosom, and that all the fiends of hell had been let loose to torment his spirit. He longed for hell itself, that he might know the worst of his case. Alas! what multitudes thus annually perish, especially from the ranks of those who call themselves moderate drinkers.

5. The death of the drunkard involves *the death of the soul.*

What is the loss of property, health, reputation, life, all things besides, compared with that of the soul? Who has charity to believe that one of the five hundred thousand drunkards in our land is a man of true piety? The poison which he drinks darkens the understanding, sears the conscience, pollutes the affections, and debases every power of the soul. It wearies the forbearance of heaven, and makes man a loathing and an abomination to his God. The drunkard is a murderer. He kills himself; and "no murderer," it is declared in the sacred volume,

"hath eternal life abiding in him." He is a drunkard; and "no drunkard," it is said, "shall inherit the kingdom of God." From the society of the pure and the blessed he must be excluded, and not only excluded, but doomed to a most certain, endless, and awful perdition—the consummation of the drunkard's sufferings and the drunkard's woes. Let us not attempt to lift the covering of the pit, where there is "weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth."

6. The death of the drunkard involves the *death of others.*

Is he the captain of a vessel? Has he a station at the helm; or the charge of a steam-engine? By the use of one glass of spirits, a hundred lives in a moment may be sacrificed. Is he a husband, a father? If not by violent hands, by his cold neglect and cruelties he wounds and breaks the heart of his wife, so that she goes rapidly to the grave. The earth seems to open and call the poor woman to her only resting-place. And his children, if not murdered by cruel blows or acts of unkindness, are tempted to follow the iniquity of the father, and lie down with him in the drunkard's grave.

7. The wretched inebriate dies *unlamented.* His death rather affords joy than grief. The community feel relieved of a burden and a nuisance. Not a tear is shed; none are anxious to do him homage, or follow his remains to the grave. Hé is borne away to the silent tomb unlamented. Had he died by any other cause, many might have mourned his loss, and wept at his burial. Is there indeed none that mourns? Ah! who is that in sable dress bending over his coffin, and weeping as if the heart would break? It is the widowed mother. "Can a mother forget?" When hope of reform had expired in every other bosom, it still lingered in hers to the last moment, and cheered her sinking spirit. Now she drops her last tear over the lifeless body of the profligate, and with signs that indicate her own rapid dissolution, exclaims, "O my son, my son, would God I had died for thee, my son, my son!" A thousand eyes are suffused with tears, in sympathy for the widow; but who has a tear to shed for that son who has thus blighted a mother's hopes, and broken a mother's heart?

IV. We call your attention to the proof, THAT ALL WHO USE, MAKE, OR VEND ALCOHOL UNDER ITS DIFFERENT FORMS AS A DRINK, ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR THE DEATH THUS PRODUCED, AND ARE JUSTLY CHARGEABLE WITH THE VIOLATION OF THE SIXTH COMMANDMENT.

With respect to those who use it as a mere beverage, we have

simply to say, our position, admitting our premises, is as clear as a sun-beam. All such, if they perish in the use of intoxicating drinks, commit wilful, deliberate self-murder. Their guilt is awful. But it is to the maker and vender of the poison as a beverage, wholesale and retail, we wish especially to apply our remarks, and to demonstrate, that for the appalling destruction of human life by intoxicating liquor they are mainly responsible; and that persisting in their business with the light now enjoyed, are justly chargeable with the *perpetration of murder.* The question may here arise, what constitutes murder? It is not necessary, I remark, to its commission, that there should invariably be malice prepense, or the intention to kill. According to Blackstone, and the best expounders of human law, the sacrifice of life from mere sordid love of gain, supreme selfishness, recklessness, or any wicked state of the heart, oftentimes constitutes murder of the most crimson die. Now we ask where on earth are there more human beings killed through the sordid love of gain, more recklessly, than in the rum-selling establishments scattered over the land? What is it but for mere paltry pence the poison that kills is sold? What characterizes the traffic from the first to the last, but entire selfishness, and an utter recklessness of the property, the happiness, and the life of another? Not a glass of spirit does the vender sell but he knows that it shortens life, and may result in the death of the inebriate himself, and that of his wife and helpless children. He robs man of his reason, and gives him that which fits him for the perpetration of the foulest, blackest murder. He values more a few pence, than he does the man's reason, his reputation, happiness, body, and soul: more than he does the man's family, or the good order and peace of society. While he receives his pay, what cares he who is robbed, wounded, or killed? What cares he, while he himself is enriched and protected by his license, how many hopes he blights, and how many hearts he makes to bleed? What cares he how many families he scatters and ruins—how many penitentiaries, alms-houses, hospitals, and grave-yards he crowds with the miserable, loathsome victims of his cupidity? If there be no intention to kill, we challenge any one to show whether, in the sight of God, there be any better state of heart in the bosom of the rum-seller than in that of the midnight assassin? Do not both, for the mere love of money, take away life? I would not, says the assassin, break in upon the man's dwelling and take life if I could otherwise obtain money. What is this but the very apology of the rum-seller. I would not follow this business of selling poison, now becoming so disreputable and so troublesome to my conscience, if I could otherwise obtain a living. I do not, says the man engaged in the unhallowed traffic, as the assassin, break in upon the innocent at midnight, and before its occupant is aware, kill

him. To such we reply, True, you do not. Did you thus, your business would not, in many respects, be so criminal or so awfully calamitous. The man that loses his life by the assassin, dies comparatively innocent; his sufferings in this and the world to come are not one millionth part of what the drunkard does or must suffer. While the man killed by the assassin dies involuntarily, the person whose life you take dies voluntarily. He commits deliberate self-murder, and you are the guilty, efficient agent in the dreadful work. Well knowing the infirmity and depravity of the inebriate, you put into his hands the instrument of death. And this you do in the sight of an indignant, virtuous community, with light pouring in upon your conscience, and against the tender entreaties and strong remonstrances of friends and relatives. In vindication, you may say you have no design to kill, no malice prepense; yet we maintain that you cannot show that you have any more real benevolence, any higher or purer principle of action, than that of the assassin. The pursuit will not stand investigation. It is contrary to the laws of God and man, and equally condemned by the civilian and divine. The rising public sentiment is against it, and the wretched inebriate himself, in the dying, honest hour, testifies against it.

1. It is contrary to *human law*.

To such a test we readily bring our charge, and ask a verdict from the bar of every criminal court in the land. It is true, indeed, that at these tribunals of justice those who deal in the poison as a beverage are not indicted, yet we contend that the great principles of law which regulate daily these courts in their decisions, render them justly liable to indictment, and the severest sentence of the law. What is the grand design of human legislation but the public good, the security of the great interest of society, especially that of human life. Hence it is we find the enactments of law so rigid with regard to every thing affecting life. Whatever is considered dangerous, or in the least degree hazardous, such as gunpowder, steam, unwholesome provisions, infectious diseases, and rabid dogs, are all matters of the most strict legislation. The law is most specific with regard to the use and sale of poisons. Any person, the law declares, that shall mingle poison with food, drink, or medicine, with an evil intent, or recklessly; or shall poison a well, or reservoir, or spring, where persons are accustomed to drink, shall be adjudged guilty of crime, and punished, though no person dies, for the space of ten years in the state-prison. Now, we ask, does not this law in its spirit, if not in the very letter, condemn the dealer in alcohol, who mingles every hour of the day the fatal poison in the drink of his neighbor? The law further declares, that if any physician, when intoxicated, prescribes

poison, or any drug or medicine which shall endanger health or life, he shall, on conviction, be adjudged guilty of crime. If an apothecary sells arsenic, corrosive sublimate, or any poison, without labelling said substance with the word "poison," he subjects himself to a heavy penalty. Why, we ask, should not he who sells one of the most dangerous and destructive poisons ever known, be subject to a severe penalty, who does not label every glass of spirits that he sells in blazing capitals—POISON? So benevolent is the law, that it protects even the lives of animals from poison, and strictly prohibits any person mingling it with the water of a pond, or a stream where there may be fish, or where cattle are accustomed to drink.

Thus we see that great principles are established, laws enacted and daily put in force that condemn and render highly criminal all those engaged in the unhallowed business. No man thus employed, indeed, could escape the arm of the law, were there in our government consistency, justice, or a proper, righteous regard in this matter to the public good. Our public authorities license men to sell the poison. Directly in opposition to the laws of their own enactment—to the order, peace, and security of the community, they grant a monopoly to a particular class of men to deal out the poison at their pleasure; to rob others of their property, their character, their health, their reason, their life, and every thing that is dear; to scatter firebrands, arrows, and death, through the length and the breadth of the land. They authorize men to pursue a business that is every where spreading desolation and death; filling the world with sorrow and wo; producing more poverty, vice, crime, disease, and actual suffering, than all other unlawful pursuits combined. Should they license the slave trade or piracy, they could not more directly act against the public good. Thus they become guilty participants in this work of death. And we ask, have they no responsibility in the matter who voluntarily uphold such a magistracy?

2. In sustaining our charge, we appeal to the *honest convictions* of our most distinguished jurists and legislators.

"The time will come," says Chancellor Walworth, "when reflecting men will no more think of vending ardent spirits, or erecting or renting grog-shops as a means of gain, than they would now think of poisoning the well from which a neighbor obtains water for his family, or of arming a maniac to destroy his own life or the lives of others." "They that sell or make ardent spirits for common use," says Judge Dagget, "are as wicked as those that sell or make poison for the same purpose; the blood of murdered bodies and souls will be required at their hands."

In reasoning eloquently on the subject, says another eminent civilian, "I know that the cup is poisoned; I know that it may cause death—more than death; that it may lead to crime, to the tortures of everlasting remorse. Am I not then a murderer; worse than a murderer; as much worse, than the soul is better than the body?" To such testimony, were it necessary to strengthen our position, we might add the published sentiments of distinguished counsellors, judges, and senators, from every section of our country. Indeed, the intelligent and virtuous throughout the community are becoming deeply impressed with a sense of the awful criminality of the traffic. "Disguise the business as they will," say the worthy gentlemen composing the committee of the New-York State Temperance Society, "in its true character it is the business of destroying the bodies and souls of men." The report of the American Temperance Society, representing the sentiments of its members, including more than two millions of our best citizens, declares, "That good men of all descriptions who are acquainted with this subject throughout the country, begin to view it as a sin of high and awful aggravation, and to believe that a man is as really guilty who kills himself, or is accessary to the death of his fellow-men, by means of ardent spirits, as by means of opium, a knife, or a pistol."

The public sentiment, happy are we to say, is now undergoing a most rapid change. The intelligent and the virtuous are retiring from the traffic as wicked and ruinous, and leaving it to those whose love of gain is stronger than their love to God or man. And without a prophet's vision, we may confidently predict that the day is not far distant, when all those engaged in the manufacturing and sale of inebriating drinks will be regarded by the civilized world with utter abhorrence, and in the same odious light as they who prosecute the slave trade, piracy, and murder. The note of remonstrance from an outraged community already has been sounded, and will wax louder and louder till an end is put to the great destroyer.

3. From the highest human authority, we appeal to that which is divine—to *the law of God.*

"Thou shalt not kill," is the solemn prohibition of heaven. If an ox was known to be dangerous, and by being turned loose destroyed life, the owner, by the principles of interpretation laid down in the sacred volume, was adjudged guilty of murder, and forfeited his life. How, then, we ask, guided by the principles of the holy oracles, can we pronounce innocent the person who recklessly lets loose a worse creature, though he may call it a good creature of God, to wound and kill his fellow-beings by scores and thousands? To this precept of the deca-

logue, "Thou shalt not kill," there is no exception made with regard to the instruments employed in taking life. He who kills by alcohol falls under its dreadful sentence as certainly as he who takes life by any other poison. Let the Bible explain itself. "Wo unto him that giveth his neighbor drink, that puttest thy bottle to him, and makest him drunken also." Here the wo of God is pronounced directly on those engaged in the traffic. Is it not the dealer in intoxicating drinks that puts the bottle to his neighbor's mouth; and is it not he that makes his neighbor drunken? To such, the Bible is a book full of wo, the flying roll which the prophet saw—full of curses. "Wo," it is said, "to the world, because of offences." By whom do so many offences come, we ask, as by those thus employed? "The drunkard shall not inherit the kingdom of God." And if the drunkard shall be excluded from the abodes of purity and bliss, must not they "become partakers of their sins, and receive of their plagues," who hold out to them the inebriating glass and allure them to sin and death? Shall he who yields to the temptation drink the vials of the wrath of God, and the tempter escape the condemnation and the curse of heaven? Does not the Bible throughout regard the tempter as the most guilty and deserving of punishment? How then shall he escape the denunciation of the sacred book whose daily business is to tempt men to sin? The spirit and the letter of God's law is utterly at war with the whole traffic.

In this exposition of the divine precept we are not alone. Thus it is regarded by its soundest expositors and advocates. Eminent divines of every religious denomination in the land have given it as their honest conviction that the man who, at the present day, with so much light in his possession, makes or sells the poison as a drink, is guilty not only of an immorality, but of a most heinous violation of the sixth commandment.

"I challenge," says Dr. Beecher, "any man who understands the nature of ardent spirits, and yet for the sake of gain continues to be engaged in the traffic, to show that he is not guilty of murder." President Wayland declares "the business equally criminal with the selling of any other poison, or propagating the plague or leprosy." And thus addresses the late President Fiske to those engaged in the pursuit: "The man is ruined, and you have been the instrument. Say not, if you do not sell, others will. Must you be a destroyer of your race because others are? Say not, if you do not sell, it will injure your business. Must you indeed deal out ruin to your fellow-men, or starve? Then starve. It would be a glorious martyrdom contrasted with the other alternative. Do not say, I sell by the large quantity; I have no tipplers about me, and therefore am not guilty. You are the chief man in this business; you are "the poisoner-general" of whom Mr. Wesley speaks; who murder your fellow-citizens by the wholesale. You stand at the

bulkhead and open the flood-gates. They from this river of fire draw off the small rivulets and direct them all over the land, to blight every hope and burn up every thing green. The greater your share in the traffic, the greater your guilt." Testimony of similar character might be gathered from the leading divines and ecclesiastical bodies of every name in our country; but we forbear.

4. In conclusion, we simply present the testimony of *the wretched, dying drunkard himself.*

As there he lies expiring, listen how he pours out his execrations, loud and awful, on the man that effected his ruin. Not long since, one who had been furnished by his neighbor with the means of destruction, and been brought by it to the verge of the grave, was visited in his last moments by the author of his ruin, who asked whether he remembered him? The dying man, forgetting his struggle with the king of terrors, said, "O yes; I remember you, and I remember your store, where I formed the habit which has ruined me for this world and the next. And when I am dead and gone, and you come and take from my widow the shattered remains of my property to pay my rum debts, they too will remember you. We shall all remember you through eternity."

With this witness we close our testimony.

In sustaining our charge, we have examined the laws of the land; we have consulted the opinions of those skilled and profound in the law. We have appealed to the honest convictions of more than two millions of our best citizens. We have quoted the law of God, and appealed to the opinions of the soundest expositors and advocates of this law. We have summoned to the bar for his testimony, the poor dying inebriate himself. And now, in view of all the evidence presented, we make our appeal to the honest convictions of our readers. We call upon you, as you gaze on the maker and vender of this poison, to say, GUILTY or NOT GUILTY?

We ask your testimony on this point, to add to that already given. Thus we hope to swell the note of alarm, and sound it the louder in the ear of every man engaged in the traffic. Thus we hope to startle them from their death-like slumbers. We would have them know the truth; what the laws of the land in their spirit declare respecting them; what our courts of justice would do with them, if consistency and righteousness were properly regarded. We would have them know what the man of science and every respectable physician have declared

respecting their business—what the ablest counsellors, judges, and senators have avowed—what the laws of God have proclaimed, and the pulpit unhesitatingly publishes. We would have them know what the rising public sentiment is, and what posterity will think and say about them. We would have them know and feel that the day of awful retribution is at hand, and what a cloud of witnesses from the ranks of those ruined are coming up to the judgment to testify against them. We would have them know, that at the judgment they *must* meet the victims of their cupidity, and with them the widow and the poor orphan. We would strike an immediate and effectual blow at their selfishness and their cruelties, arouse their consciences, and alarm their fears. We would persuade them to abandon for ever the vile and ruinous traffic, and thus save their names from eternal infamy, and their souls from perdition. Who can look on those thus dealing out the liquid poison, and not pronounce them guilty. Let the widow tell her story of sorrows. Let the orphan speak. And ye wives, from your bleeding, broken hearts, bear testimony. Is not the man guilty who has made the drunkard of your husband—robbed you of his love, his society, and that protection and support to which you were entitled? Is he not guilty? From your aching bosom the response is heard, "guilty, guilty!" Go, then, injured woman, and tell the destroyer, "you are killing my husband." Go with your infant in your arms, and with all the little ones, and hold them up to the sight of him that poisons and makes a monster of their father. The sight, accompanied with a mother's tears and a mother's prayers, may reach his heart and stop the inhuman traffic.

Fathers and mothers, we call on you. Behold your profligate sons, how they throng the places where the cup of death is sold. How rapid their course to the grave. Yonder is a thoughtless youth. See that man hand him the glass; it is full of the deadly poison. Mark how, for paltry pence, he stabs the body and the soul of thy child. In a moment reason is gone; he raves, he reels, and falls. By the hands of the seducer he is tumbled into the street. There the young profligate lies. Hark the shout of the wicked mob. Hasten, parents, to thy erring child. Alas! he is dead. And who murdered the child? Every bosom responds, the man that sold him the poison. O, what cruel, horrid work is this! It has indeed filled the world with the wounded, the dying, and the dead; with blighted hopes and broken hearts; with widows and with orphans; and the gray hairs of fathers and mothers with sorrow it has brought down to the grave. When, when shall it stop? Is there no end to this river of death? Shall it never cease to pour its withering, burning waters over the land and the world? *Never*, until the community awake more to the subject, and take hold of the work of reform with an interest and effort becoming the appalling magnitude of the evil. Never, until the moderate drinker,

and the drunkard, the distiller, the importer, the vender of the poison, and all directly or indirectly engaged in promoting the traffic, shall be viewed and treated by society as their character deserves. Never, until the magistracy of the land, sustained by a virtuous people, shall withhold their countenance and support from the traffic. Never, until the sons of Levi purify themselves; and the church of God "come out from among them and be separate, and touch not the *unclean thing*." Never, until the principle of total abstinence from all intoxicating drinks shall every where prevail. Never, until *the name*, the influence, the property, the prayers, and interests of all be solemnly pledged to the support of the temperance cause. When this is done, the glorious work of reform shall be achieved. This awful scourge of the human race shall cease. The destroying angel shall take his flight. Earth shall burst into the beauty and freshness of Eden. "Peace shall be within her walls, and prosperity within her palaces." The angel having the everlasting Gospel shall be seen flying without an hinderance, bearing the precious treasure to every creature. And it shall be published throughout the utmost bounds of earth, and echoed and re-echoed through the wide vaults of heaven: "The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord and his Christ, and he shall reign for ever and ever." "Even so, come, Lord Jesus. Amen."

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SERMON CCXC.

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AMERICAN POLITICS.

If thou let this man go, thou art not Cœsar's friend.—John, 19: 12.

Miserable man! degraded people!—he that could hear, they that they could urge so base an argument. Because he hesitates to give the order for crucifying a citizen guilty of no crime, they cry out against him as false to Cæsar. "Thou art not Cæsar's friend," they cry in their wrath, and they mean by this, as much as to say, "We will destroy you in the Emperor's confidence, and have you removed from office." The pliant courtier and politician basely listens to their threat, and consents to gratify their malice!

Entering into the history of Christ's trial and crucifixion at this gate, or from this point of view, I propose to survey it as a scene of Jewish politics, and draw from it such admonitions as it will yield for our benefit.

The public mind is now so deeply absorbed in the politics of the country, that we can hardly get a hearing for the more spiritual truths of the Gospel. The people have no ears to hear aught besides the harangues of their great assemblies, and the reports of their expresses. What, then, shall we do since you turn away your ears so far from the great truths of God and eternity, but go after you, carrying these truths with us, and endeavor to surround you with them in the dusty strifes of your political arena.

Our country, at this moment, exhibits a new spectacle; one, too, in which we are called both to exult and tremble. When we see such immense masses of men moving and combining against each other, all with so high a spirit and yet without violence or bloodshed, the whole nation sleeping as securely each night as if guarded by a standing army of bayonets; then, when we consider that this tremendous array of numbers and masses is nothing but the constitutional working of a people to accomplish the high office of self-government, we have before us a spectacle in which every American may well exult. The fondest dreams of philosophy in the old world almost never gave out a vision of hope more splendid or sublime than the actual scene now exhibited by our country. What monarch of the old world would not turn pale at such a stir of the people as this? What established order would not be shaken by it, unless strengthened by arms? We are giving ourselves, too, in one view, a higher proof of permanence and of the security of our great principle of self-government than ever before since the foundations were laid. If we can stand the rocking of this sea and not have the joints of civil order loosened, it is high time to thank God for the peculiar glory and happiness he gives us, and promise, on our knees, never to despair of our country.

But there still is room, as I said, for trembling. It is impossible that such a profound commotion of the popular spirit as now heaves the bosom of the nation, should not, if continued, produce a great moral effect and strongly mark the public character. Anything that takes deep hold of a people and penetrates their whole mass with emotion, will be an object of concern to minds well versed in the laws of society; and especially if the agitating cause is one of long continuance. When are we to expect, then, that this political agitation will be over? As our country spreads out in breadth, and becomes every year more populous as the varied interests of society become more distinct and important; as the sweets of office are tasted by a greater and hungrier multitude, and the fact that every office is open to every man, has suggested hope to as many as will have the effrontery to forward their claims; can we ever look for a period of cessation such as we have had in former years? Or must we always be on the edge of strife much as we are now? Is it, or not, the philosophy of our institutions, that we are to exist in a continual press of political agitation? As some governments have made a warlike, some a commercial, some an agricultural people, some a people of arts and letters, are we not constituted as a political people? Brewing on from age to age in our great caldron of popular elections, are we not, like the old Athenians, to become a people whose chief passion,

and highest end, and strongest appetite, is politics? I confess it sometimes so appears to me. And if politics are thus to lead in the character of our people, and give the direction to our moral habits, I tremble, lest, in this way, we go down ere long into an abyss of irreligion and popular corruption, out of which we can never rise. We shall wear down, I fear, all the great principles and moral forces that have made us what we are, and then die out, as a lamp whose oil is spent. Our cabals and factions, our unprincipled appeals, our mutual attacks upon character, our reckless determination to treat religion and everything sacred in that way which will make it most augment the capital of our party, or diminish that of our antagonists—where, I am compelled to ask, will these combined causes carry us, if not downward into a prostration of all virtue? Of this one thing, at least, no thoughtful or reasonable man can doubt—our system of popular elections must have a fearful influence on the moral and religious destiny of our people. Politics cannot be a leading interest in the public mind, without making us such as our politics are. If artful, abounding in false views and false pretences—a people without truth. If too fierce and irresponsible to be restrained by laws and oaths of office—then a factious people, loose on the chances of perpetual revolution. If unjust to merit, jealous of virtue, and readily moved by a hatred of sacred institutions—a people without God or religion.

I do not say or believe that we are destined thus to sink as a nation. I only express a *fear*—a reasonable fear; which I do not as despairing of the future, but as raising a guard against the very dangers in view. It is one thing to fear, another to despair. Fear is ever twin to hope, and the two sisters go hand in hand all their lives long. Hope whispers courage to her more timid sister, and she, in turn, whispers caution to hope; so that, between them both, we may neither faint nor miscarry. Repelling despair, therefore, at all points, let us also be willing to fear, and fearing, to apply those cautions and erect those safe-guards which are proper to our case.

It is with a view to lend what force I can in this direction, that I am now to speak. I claim no right to meddle, in this place, with any political question, whether in regard to men or measures; unless, perhaps, measures may be attempted which are against the fundamental principles of morality and virtue. That I have no preference of feeling between the two great parties which now divide the nation, I certainly do not pretend. I have as good right to such preference as any other citizen, and shall exercise it as freely. But, as a minister of religion, it is my duty, and I claim also the ability,

to speak of both or either of these great parties as the principles of truth and religion require. I am here no more a citizen, but an official advocate or teacher of the laws of God. And, in this character, it is my duty to search out what is morally corrupt or dangerous, and expose it wherever it may be found; to assert the laws of God, and do what I can to establish their sober influence over men—not every where, save here in the domain of politics, but in every sphere and department of action into which they go. If, in the discharge of such a duty, what I ought to say infringes on one or both your parties, it shall give me no concern. It is not I that say it, but the truth, and truth is impassable to whatsoever blame you may cast upon her.

But I was to review the closing scenes of our Saviour's history. The political character of this scene may have escaped your notice, and you may ask me, perhaps, to specify what there is in this scene of a political nature?

Observe, then, that our Lord came professedly to establish a *kingdom*, and, surveying the history from this point, you will have a good clue to all that followed. His enemies understood by the kingdom spoken of, a temporal kingdom, and even his very disciples were slow to receive a better conception of his meaning. Great multitudes went after him, and he was exceedingly popular, for a time, with the lower clases of society, who seem to have taken up the indefinite hope of some splendid issue to be reached under his leadership. Many thought that he would break the Roman yoke and re-establish the Jewish independence. Others appeared to expect that he would change ends with society, not only releasing them from their burdens, but exalting them to eminence and official splendor in the state. And some, for aught I know, were expecting that the fields would yield their plenty without labor, and the sands of the rivers change to floods of gold ready coined. The most indefinite hopes are ever those which most captivate the multitude. The excitement ran so high, and such an immense concourse of people went after the Saviour, that the higher class of citizens, and those most connected with official rank, began to fear a revolution. The scribes, and priests, and publicans, or revenue collectors, the whole swarm of state and church officials were disturbed. They watched the Saviour, they caught up rumors concerning him. They even went out into Galilee to see what he was doing there, and whether some great mischief were not brewing in that quarter. And the Saviour, on more than one occasion, denounced against them, when present, the severest woes, on account of the oppressive burdens they laid upon the people. This the more

alarmed them. They began to speak of him as a dangerous man, turning the people's heads with his doctrine,—"Nay, but he deceiveth the people." At length it was determined among the officials at Jerusalem that it would do to be quiet no longer. They had him arrested. This is said to be done by the chief priests and elders. But these, according to their system, were all political characters; for between ecclesiastical and political matters they had no distinction. Perhaps they were afraid, not merely of Christ, but also that Pilate, the Roman Governor, would by-and-by side with the party of Christ, and take occasion, in that way, to demolish utterly the now tottering system of Moses; in which case all their official procedures, their tithes, taxes, and other immunities, would perish. It was therefore a great problem with them how to enlist Pilate against Christ as soon as it could be done. And to this end they cunningly endeavored to work upon his fears, and at the same time upon those of Herod, who governed in Galilee, by representing that Christ and his army of followers were likely to raise a standard of revolt against the Roman supremacy. How well they succeeded we see in the fact that Pilate and Herod, who had been personal enemies before, were now brought into a coalition, and, for the time, made friends together, for the sake of crushing so dangerous a person. Christ, I have said, was arrested. But now the difficulty was to obtain a sentence against him; for the Roman government was a government of law, and Pilate could proceed against the Saviour only upon good evidence, and according to the strict forms of justice. A caucus, or something like it, was held in the night, to arrange a plan and prepare material for an accusation. They drew from the Saviour words which they affected to consider blasphemous. They caught up words, also, which he had used before, and perverted their meaning, giving them a false construction. They also hired false witnesses against him. In the meantime, or during the night, they contrived also to win over many of the multitude, or to overawe them by the violence of their proceedings. In the morning, too, before Pilate, they raised a fierce and savage outcry against Christ, which, it was well understood, would be contagious among the herd of the people. They shouted and echoed, and shouted again, "Crucify him, crucify him," till all began to think that one so hated must be an evil person, and joined in the common cry. Still Pilate had scruples, though ready to condemn, if he could; and what should now be done? To whip him in they raised a different cry, declaring in their rage that he was not Cæsar's friend. A mere politician's scruples are easily mastered. And how could Pilate be less ambitious to please Cæsar, from whom he had his office, than the multitude, who had and hoped for nothing from him. So they prevailed.

This brief review must suffice, I think, to convince you of the high political character of this great scene of sacred history. It was really a scene of Jewish politics, or it came as near, at least, to what we call politics, as the Jewish institutions would permit. It was a struggle of the popular will, a struggle on one side, at least, for precedence and office, as really as if it had been a contest at the polls on some annual election. On this most solemn and fearful, then, of all earthly scenes, we are to look for a lesson of public warning and correction. And I pray God, that as he has seen fit to connect the death of his Son with a scene of political frenzy, so we may draw from it (which doubtless he intended) those suggestions of principle and caution which may be needful to guide us safely in like cases. In this view, let me proceed to bring into more distinct notice some particulars in the history. And let not your minds be diverted from all proper effort, by guessing at some unmeaning analogies or parallels which may be secretly intended. What I have to say I say openly, pointing the finger for myself, meaning just what I say and no more. Observe then,

1. We have it here in proof that a false and base appeal will sometimes go farther in politics than any other. I say not that it always will, for the noblest actions and the most generous motives to action are to be found, at times, in the fields of political history. I only advance a solemn caution, which no man should ever have out of mind, that the basest appeals may, and often do, have the greatest sway in such matters. What a scene is here exhibited, when Pilate, to save his office, or his standing with Cæsar, truckles to the malice of the multitude, and consents to the crucifixion of Jesus! Nothing else could persuade him—no evidence given, however plausible, no argument of law. But when he hears the taunt, "Thou art not Cæsar's friend,' then he says, "Take ye him and crucify him." His strong sense of justice, clearly visible in his conduct, his sacred oath of office, is nothing to him longer. Ah, and have we no Pilates now—none that will violate their oaths and pervert the administration of their offices to show that they are Cæsar's friend? And, on the other side, among those who are so much in earnest to change the administration of the government, are there none who have an eye to the future Cæsar, and are hoping to repay their industry out of the new distribution of favors and offices? Your parties say this, I observe, each of the other. If what you say is altogether false, then must there be a cruel destitution of truth in your warfare. If true, then must there be much of greediness and profligacy in it. And this latter I so far believe, that if all the motives and aims of all your actors and agitators in this contest could

be suddenly unmasked and set out bare to the sun, as they will be at the judgment-seat, the sky would blush over your land, and all true men of integrity and lovers of their country (who I trust are still the much greater number) would tremble lest these political strifes, by the base motives they engender, should finally debeuch every remnant of virtue in the nation. Human nature has not changed since the days of Pilate; and therefore I would warn you of the dangers to which you are ever to be exposed in this field. You will ever be addressed here by the basest suggestions of selfishness. You may act from a pure love of country, which is a noble impulse; or from a love of principle, which is yet nobler; but you are also very likely to act from a much meaner impulse; for there is one ever lurking here at your side which has the insidiousness of a serpent, and will have you under the spell ere you know it, unless fortified against its approaches. The most mercenary and greedy of our politicians are never sensible of the utter degradation of their principles. Actually sold into sin, they yet go on, declaiming about the welfare of the country as earnestly and industriously as if they really had the purest and loftiest aims; so little do they understand their own character. Nor is it merely the candidates or expectants that are liable to be governed here by false or perverse motives. The multitude, who cried "crucify him," were as low in their motives as Pilate, or the priests and elders. Human nature is tinder to all sorts of unholy fire. And is there no danger lest wicked motives and base appeals may often prevail with the general multitude on such occasions? Will hatred of merit and character never have a determining influence with them? Will the envy of wealth and station never operate? Will opposition to religion and good men never operate? And if such motives are brought into play at every annual election, and fused into the public spirit, when it is all in a red glow, how rapid and rank must be the corruption wrought? Every strong exercise of what is bad gives it vigor. If the men who cried "crucify" against the Saviour, and crucified him, had met every year to do the like, for thirty years, what a crew of monsters must they have become! I know that good principle is sometimes brought into action in our elections as well as bad; but who that remembers how the base preponderates in our nature, and how apt the multitude are to yield to the baser passions, and how strong these passions must become at every annual or stated period of exercise, can do otherwise than tremble at the possible extinction, at length, of all goodness and virtue among us! And the more so, when it is so evident that many of our politicians spare no means of carrying their vote, however mercenary, or low, or wicked.

2. We are admonished that victory, in politics, is no *sure* test of the right. It was a victory of this kind that crucified the Saviour of the world. The voices that cried "Crucify him, crucify him," prevailed. And if we pass by the cross, we hear the victorious party there shouting in mockery and wagging their heads at the righteous victim of their malice. You have now two great parties in the field, and one or the other is to be victorious. Doubtless that party will be filled with high exultation. They will declare it by their flags flaunting on the air, and their cannon thundering down the valleys. But will it be the victory of merit and right, or the victory of art, and mischief, and corruption? It may be one, or it may be the other; for, as I just now showed you, the basest appeals will sometimes go as far in politics as any other. You must always go beyond the mere *fact* of victory, therefore, to find whether you will have any real ground of exultation. And when we go up to stand before God and answer, not by party declamation, but by the test of real merit, you will find it so. Many a victory then will show itself to de a victory of wrong over right. See to it. then, every man, that the victory he is after is a victory of truth and justice; for it must be evident to every man, that if our nation is ever undone, it must be by such victories at our elections as are not victories of truth and principle. Prefer always to be vanquished rather than to win by falsehood, or stratagem, or bargain. Say not, as I sometimes hear, we must conquer the devil with his own weapons; for that is only to create a stouter and worse devil than the old, and curse your country with two instead of one. It is casting out devils by Beelzebub. No, if you cannot make right measures victorious, do not rob your country of all right men. An upright minority is better than universal corruption, and a good cause had better be lost than basely gained. The lust of victory is a dangerous passion. It will prove to you, alas, too easily, that your cause is a right one; nay, that the salvation of your country is in it. Be jealous, therefore, of yourselves, and see that you are not betrayed into the folly of a hard and toilsome struggle for that which is only a real mischief and shame to your country. I say not this to check your ardor, or keep you back from strenuous exertion. It is no merit to be a tame or timorous actor in this field. Only see, as you will do it when you stand before the judgment seat, that you act from a sober, well-ascertained view of the public good.

3. The hollowness of political friendships and alliances is here made evident. What are they, as we too often see them, but mere coalitions of selfishness and ambition; a Herod and a Pilot made friends together. Before, they were enemies;

to-day they are friends, (if we may so desecrate the word ; because their interest compels them ; to-morrow we may e pect they will be enemies again, the more hostile and spiteful because they are parted by treachery. Just so it has been, too often, in the history of courtiers and politicians from Adam downward. Nowhere else can you find such a record of treacheries and violated friendships. True friendships, warmly returned and permanent as life, are seldom found here. The friendships we find are mostly mere coalitions, and the mental habits formed are those of jealousy, inconstancy, and utter heartlessness. Nor is it merely a few leaders that we see so often manœuvring to form new alliances, and try their fortune in new fields every few years; but the mass of the people, in their circles and neighborhoods, are ever undergoing a like round of chimical change and re-assortment. If I mistake not, the effect of this process is quite evident in the American character, and is becoming more so daily. We have less warmth of friendship, and fewer of those old brightening attachments that part only as death severs them, than are to be found in other nations. I am willing to think that the fact of which I speak is due, in part, to our youth as a people ; that is, to our want of leisure and our unsettled migratory character. But it cannot be concealed, that our constant state of political warfare, our new coalitions, begetting a habit of universal distrust ; and our mutual abuses of character have all the same tendency, a tendency which every wise man and true lover of his country will deeply lament. And religion has a greater interest in the case than might be readily supposed. For there is a close and honorable dependence between habits of friendship and habits of piety. They both demand a warm and a large heart, and having this in the breast of the people, they are almost sure to dwell there together, sanctifying the pleasures and employments of life by a common influence. Never was a heartless people known to be a religious people. Let every Christian give this fact due weight. Let every man, too, who is plunging into this sea of politics, inquire how far he will go? whether he is willing to give up all heart, and love, and social truth, to win success as a courtier of the people?

4. We are admonished that religious men may easily mistake the nature of their zeal in politics. The Scribes and Pharisees were men eminently religous, if we speak of their professions and their outward life. They made long prayers, they were exact in every form and ceremony of Moses. They held every tradition of the church as the apple of their eye. And yet, to our view, they acted more like devils in their zeal than like men. But not in their own view, for

they did not know the spirit they were of. They were carried away by their political zeal to such a degree, that they even felt as if the most sacred interests of religion rested on their success. In fact they proceeded against the Saviour mainly on religious pretexts, though actuated, unwittingly, by no other object than to serve their party and their power. Christ, they said, had uttered profane threats against the holy temple, and the high priest actually rent his clothes, so horrified were his reverend ears by the Saviour's plasphemy. They spoke of law too. We have a law by which he ought to die. Fine pretexts these,—law and religion! Better, surely could not be formed. Ah, and how many christians, so called in these days, know as little the spirit they are of when kindled in our political strifes! The country, they will say, is in danger; the holy ark of religion is in danger. Perhaps it is so—and perhaps the danger we are in is as great as they suppose. But if so, they give us the best of all proofs that they have too often no intelligent perception of the fact, by their desertion of all the proper duties of their profession. When should a true christian pray, if not when the country is in danger? When will he gather himself to the church in her pious councils and convocations, if not when the ark of religion is in danger? But no, they are not here. And for this they have the best of all reasons, they fancy, viz: that they have to fight for the very existence of religion in the great campaign of politics! How can they pray, how meet with the church, how instruct their families, when they have to attend so many caucuses for the faith, and cry their hosannas in so many long processions of the people? Understand me; I make no objection to the long procession, nor even to your being in them. I only say, that when christians are so hurried away in the rush of the multitude, as to desert their most sacred duties, they do not know the spirit they are of. They declare, by that fact, that they have lost the balance of their christian intelligence. They are not only actuated by the worldly spirit in one of its rankest forms, but they are addled by it. I have no longer any confidence, in such a case, that they are governed by sober perceptions of truth or duty. Or if they may have begun with some real principles worth contending for, I perceive, by their extravagance and the loss of their self-possession, that they are already whipped in and tamed to tread where the party lions lead them. While the christian holds to his true place and his duties, there is somewhat of independence in him; he at least acts from consideration. How great, then, is the dishonor and the loss when religious men lose this holy individuality and become mere parts or particles in a public whirlwind! When I see how many such fall into all the rabid measures and styles that be-

long to party discipline, their perfect incapacity to understand how anything can be done by their opposers without some corrupt intention; their intolerent proscriptive spirit towards every man that will not be an unqualified partizan with them; their hatred of every press that prefers to abide by truth, and will only give them a partial sanction; I am filled with sadness that christian men should melt so passively into the moulds of worldly infatuation. Nay, I seem to see the old Scribes and Pharisees over again, and hear their frenzied cry. And it forms no unnatural background to the picture, that every Nicodemus among the people, who has a private scruple, or will minister to his persecuted Lord, is constrained to do it slily and with a timerous heart.

Again, we are led to inquire what part is proper to the women of our land in these political strifes. It is worth noticing, that of the two women most conspicuous in the history of our Lord's trial-scene, Pilate's wife, who stayed at home, gave him some good advice, which it had been well for him to follow; while the buisy maid, who went, actually faced down an apostle, and made him lie and swear as vilely as the worst man could. Some, I know, are pleased to unite the ladies in their political demonstrations, because their presence greatly conduces to preserve order and decorum. And doubtless it does in its first effects. It is an honorable distinction of our country, that we pay so delicate a respect to the female sex, and that our roughest men, our roughest assemblages, are seen to be softened and dignified by their presence. But I am greatly jealous still of the future effects that will follow, if the practice alluded to is continued. It will not take many years of rough publicity, in these ways, to make our ladies mere women to us, an abolish the delicate respect we yield them. They will no longer grace the fireside by their retiring softness, whispering in the ears of their husbands their pious cautions, or nice religious scruples, or, if you please, their ominous dreams, as the lady of the ill-starred Pilate did on the morning of his fall, but they will become our maids and runners, heard in the noise of our assemblies, handled, as chance may be or malice direct, in the public papers, mere female men, and one with us in all but the ability to be more than second or third-rate actors in our rough contests. I should be silent on this subject, were it not for the revolution which is beginning to appear in the manners of the female sex in a certain section of our country. I am anxious that such a revolution should have no general countenance any where. Perhaps I am unreasonably anxious, but if that revolution goes on as it has begun, it will certainly destroy some of the most precious and best influences we have left. Do save us one-half of society free of the

broils, and bruises and arts of demagogy! Let us have a place of quiet, and some quiet minds which the din of our public war never embroils. Let a little of the sweetness, and purity, and, if we can have it, of the simple religion of life remain. God made the woman to be a help for man, not to be wrestler with him. This he declared in the grand sacrament of creation, and we have a greater interest in the arrangement, as religious beings, than many ever stay to consider. Here it is that feeling is kept alive in us, and our affection saved from utter extinction. United here by truth and love, the truth of heaven and the love of God find a place also to enter our hearts. Or if this be too much, our nature is at least prepared, in a degree, to understand and open itself to the blessed approaches of religion. But if to all our present powers of strife and faction we are to add a race of factious women, there will not be left enough of feeling and rest to make life tolerable or allow virtue to breathe.

Again, the scene of Christ's trial and crusifixion shows us what to think of the sacredness of democracy. It has been given out, within the past year, with a profound philosophical bow to the people, and especially to christin people, that "democracy is holy." It is not enough that irreligion, or the hatred of religion, should be addressed and won by appeals to the vilest prejudices, but a sop also must be thrown to religion that she also may be gained. Now I have no objection to any such praises of democracy as our countrymen may choose, if they do not trespass on the sacred distinctions of truth and holiness. That the religion of Christ is a popular religion I most certainly believe; neither is any one better suited with the popular character of our institutions. But when it is given out that democracy is holy, the insult offered to religion is too offensive to be suffered. What do we see? But yesterday the populace were all for Christ and followed him with their hosannas. To-day they are with the Scribes and Pharisees crying "Crucify him, crucify him. And the cries of them and of the chief priests prevailed. Yes, they prevailed; they were a high majortty. Democracy holy! What was it when its multitudinous voice clamored for the blood of the Saviour of the world. Here was Pilate on one side, the organ of an imperial throne; here were the populace on the other, all staining their hands together in his blood, and declaring to the world by that sign, that man is fallen and unholy every where; that kings and thrones are unholy, that democracies are unholy, that all are cruel and treacherous, and violent, and unfit to be trusted And this is what we, as the ministers of religion, are obliged to declare. We are obliged to say that sin reigns in man universally, making him both a slave and a tyrant in his

nature. That you can trust him with no interest, no form of government, and have it safe. No checks can tame him, no balances keep him in the sacred bounds of order. He will abuse power, pervert justice, betray trusts, and perpetrate all mischiefs, because he is a sinner. The many may be as bad as the few, or the one, as bad a tyrant, as faithless a guardian of the public welfare. Under any and all forms of government you will have unholy work; for man is unholy, your king is unholy, your democracy is unholy, full of mischiefs, treacheries, cruelties, and lies. This is the doctrine of the Gospel, and, what is, if possible, less to be doubted, the doctrine of our eyes.

But it is only meant, you may suspect, that the *doctrine* of democracy as *the true form* of government is holy, i. e. sanctioned by Christ. But before we are deluded thus, we had better ask, where and when it was done by him? When did he condescend to tell us that ours is the true form of government? When lend himself to any such mischievous flattery as this? When did he undertake to be a lecturer for democracy? And when his apostle dared to say of *all* the forms of government, "the powers that be, are ordained of God," did he there controvert his Master's special predilection for democracy as the only holy form?

The sentiment of which I speak, on this head, is yet a strange sound, I rejoice to believe, to all but a few of our people. But being uttered under the imposing garb of philosophy, we can by no means judge, as yet, how far it will go. It may yet produce a new style of jacobinism in our country, viz.: Gospel jacobinism; a fanatical storm, in which all the elements of religion and politics shall be blended, and their distinction lost.

Again, we are admonished in our history, of the depravity of the doctrine which proposes to give the spoils of victory to the victors. Let me take you to the scene where your Lord is crucified, and, after the work is done, I will point you then to four men, not the most worthy, sitting down to parcel out the garments of the crucified Saviour, and casting their lots for the seamless robe he wore. These, too, were receivers of the spoils. Now this doctrine, which proposes to give the spoils to the victors, has been imputed mostly to one of our political parties, and as some suppose, has been avowed by that party. Of this I am willing to doubt. However this may be, I will on no account be deterred from speaking of it as it deserves. I do it not as a politician, but as a minister of God and virtue, and in this character I am bound to speak of any thing, any where, that is corrupt or demoralizing. We shall see, perhaps how far the opposing party will abjure this doctrine of the spoils, and whether it is not yet to be the universal doctrine of politics in the land.

If so, then shall we have a scene in this land never before exhibited on earth; one which would destroy the integrity and sink the morality of a nation of angels. It will be as if so many offices, worth so much, together with the seamless robe of our glorious constitution, were held up to be the price of victory, and as if it were said, "Look ye, people, here is a premium offered to every discontent you can raise, every combination or faction you can mention, every lie you can invent. Cupidity here is every man's right—try for what you can, and as much as you can get you shall have." Let no one say that I here enter the field of politics myself. I speak here as a defender of moral principle, which is my duty. If there be any party in the State, or is to be, that holds out or avows this rule, it is a party which pollutes the public morals. Our Saviour taught us to be more than just to the Government, more than quiet citizens. He said, "Render unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's." But this says, "Throw down Cæsar if you can, and his place is yours!" Only conceive such a lure held out to this great people, and all the little offices of the government thus set up for the price of the victory, without regard to merit, or any thing but party services, and you have a spectacle of baseness and rapacity such as was never seen before. No preaching of the Gospel in our land, no parental discipline, no schools, not all the machinery of virtue together, can long be a match for the corrupting power of our political strifes actuated by such a law as this. It would make us a nation of apostates at the foot of Sinai.

Again, it will serve to impart seriousness and sobriety in these contests, if we notice in our history, that every man is individually responsible for what he does. Too many think that they escape all responsibility, because they act in such a great party of men, or in such a vast array of numbers. "What am I among so many? True, the thing was wrong in itself, but we could not save the party without it. I only acted as I was compelled to act in the circumstances, and the blame must rest upon my friends, not upon me." Ah, and what a scene have we here! See this Roman governor. He had protested again and again, saying, "I find no cause of death in this man." But they would not hear him; and they begin to tell him in their rage that he is not Cæsar's friend. Now he assents; and see the solemn farce that follows! Secretly disturbed, perhaps, by the admonition his wife gave him, he calls for water, takes it, and washing his hands before the people, says—"I am innocent of the blood of this just person, see ye to it." Ah, let him wash again! Rivers of water cannot wash out the blood that stains his guilty hands! Pilate is responsible for what he has done, and when he meets the Lord Jesus at his bar, he must meet him

as a perjured judge and a crucifier. It will not suffice to say that he only went with the multitude: he ought to have withstood them. So is every one of you responsible to God for what you do, however pushed by numbers. You cannot wash your hands by throwing your guilt upon others. And for every wrong or corrupt act you favor, you must go into judgement side by side with Pilate, when tried as a cruel magistrate and a crucifier of the Lord.

Again, we ought to be admonished of the fact, that men do often seal their undoing in the strifes of politics. The trial and crucifixion of Christ, I have shown you, is in one view a scene of Jewish politics. Then, doubtless the unhappy Pilate sealed the fate of his immortality. The same was true, probably, of many others; and they have gone to their account as the crucifiers of Jesus with the blood upon their heads. To all these, that was a fatal hour. Think it not incredible that many, in the greal election of our country now at hand, may do the same. What terrible passions are here brought into play! What desperate means and expedients will be suggested! How many will be tempted to give or receive a bribe! How many will violate their oath of office, or their elector's oath! How many will do a fatal violence to their conscience! Yes, my hearers, in this single campaign many of our countrymen will probably seal their eternal ruin; and it becomes you all to go into it with this truth full before you. I by no means counsel you to stay away and take no part in the election. You escape no responsibility by so doing. You have a duty here which must be performed. When the disciples forsook their Master and fled, it was no credit to them; it was only forsaking virtue and truth, and leaving them in the hands of their enemies.

Again, it must be remembered in our subject, that the fate of a country is often at stake on the issue of a single turn of politics. From the moment when the Scribes and Pharisees prevailed, the doom of their country and temple was sealed. The sceptre now departed from Judah and went over to the Gentiles. Shortly after, in the siege of Titus, Jerusalem became, within, such a scene of starvation, faction, and murder, that it seemed as if some wonderful curse had changed the nature of men to that of fiends and monsters. So was the glory of the temple and the covenants blotted out for ever by the visible hand of the Almighty. Deem it not impossible that we may decide, even in a single election, the fate of our nation for ever. Would that our political leaders had a greater sense of their responsibility in this respect. They do not consider, I fear, the vastness of the interests they hold in jeopardy,—not impossibly our name and constitution, the happiness they have given this great people, and the glorious history by which their memory is sanctified.

Once more, if our institutions are to fall in this or any other future crisis, it ought to be a source of comfort that the government of God will stand, and that he will permit such an event only as he can overrule it to the furtherance of his glorious plans. What a fall was it when the Son of God was crucified! There virtue fell! There the Prince of Israel! There the divine person of the Son! The wreck came close to the throne and fell against it! But that fall was the life of the world, our hope, our light, and the spring of eternal joy to myriads of redeemed spirits. If, then, our great nation, and our free institutions, which are now a star of hope to many gazing eyes, should be overwhelmed, which I trust in God and really believe they never will, be assured that God will suffer it only for the furtherance of his good designs. The event will come, only to be overruled and blessed to mankind. How cheerful and composing a thought, that when all the bulwarks of human law and order are tremulous, there is a government above which no agitation or tumult ever reaches; one whose laws are equity, whose councils are those of eternal wisdom and love. In this grand monarchy, or, if you please, republic of the skies, (for such in a sense it is), all events are peacefully turned and moulded to their place; everlasting order reigns unshaken. I should think, my friends, that some of you who are weary and war-worn in this dusty field of politics, would be often looking away thither, and sighing for a rest in its arms!

I have thus taken you, my hearers, over a somewhat promiscuous field, but I hope not without benefit. My aim has been to impress you with the seriousness of your responsibilities in this direction. I have endeavored to go after you in this great field, and carry with me truths which you ought to remember. I hope you are at least impressed with a sense of the very intimate relation between politics and morals in our country. How easily are the passion of our people enlisted here, and how deeply. These great gatherings, these fervid appeals, stir the strongest feelings in their bosoms. Are they virtuously stirred? I believe they often are. But I see so many appeals that are base in the lowest degree, and witness the assault of so many things that are sacred, that I cannot restrain my anxiety. And the more so because the strongest force is here at work upon our moral character that can be produced. What, then, is to be the result of these political agitations on the moral tone of our country? We are going rapidly in some direction, and it is time for every true American to ask WHITHER?

A

GENERAL INDEX,

A

TOPICAL INDEX;

AND A

TEXTUAL INDEX

OF THE

NATIONAL PREACHER,

FOR

FORTY YEARS.

FROM 1826 TO 1866. IN FORTY VOLS.

WITH AN ADDENDA INDEX,

FOR CONVENIENCE AND REFERENCE.

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NATIONAL PREACHER.

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OR,

Original Monthly Sermons

FROM

LIVING MINISTERS.

CONDUCTED BY

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At No. 5 Beekman Street, New-York.

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1826 TO 1866.

THE NATIONAL PREACHER.

A GENERAL AND TOPICAL INDEX.

COMPRISING VOLUMES ONE TO THIRTY-EIGHT, INCLUSIVE.

THE following Topical Index of subjects which are to be found in the pages of this work, and which have been discussed more or less in the nine hundred and forty-eight discourses of THE NATIONAL PREACHER, by about five hundred ministers and pastors of different Evangelical denominations, during the past thirty years or more—many of whom were, and are, eminent men in the churches of this land—has been prepared with great care, and embraces a variety of subjects and topics of great practical importance, in varied form and phraseology, rarely if ever found in any one work of a religious character. Such an index of this work has long been needed and called for, and it can not fail greatly to enhance the value of the work by furnishing a ready access to the vast treasures of thought which it contains.

W. H. BIDWELL,
No. 5 Beekman Street.

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A TEXTUAL INDEX

OF THE

NATIONAL PREACHER,

FROM 1826 TO 1864 INCLUSIVE:

SHOWING THE VARIOUS PASSAGES OR TEXTS OF SCRIPTURE, IN THE DIFFERENT BOOKS OF THE BIBLE, IN THEIR ORDER, USED AS THEMES OF DISCOURSE, BY THE AUTHORS AND MINISTERS IN THE NINE HUNDRED SERMONS EMBRACED IN THE THIRTY-SEVEN YEARS, OR VOLUMES, OF THE NATIONAL PREACHER FROM THE BEGINNING.

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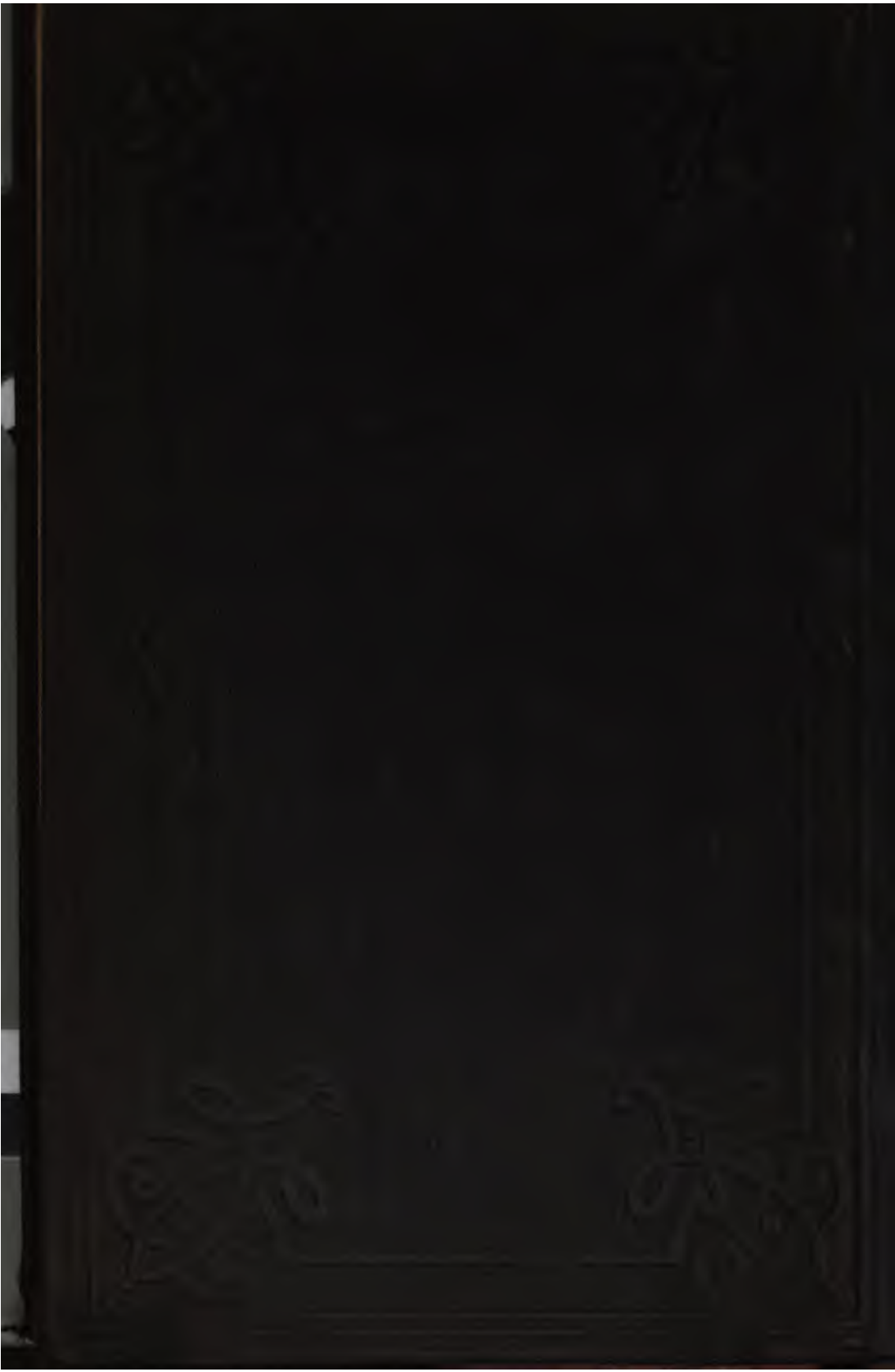
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